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Berkeley Lake to Receive Professional Tree Assessment

How much are those trees worth that are growing in your yard; down the street; in your community? Until recently, the value of trees growing in our cities and towns was not easily understood. True, trees provided aesthetic beauty to our homes which made them of marginal value at best, but in the summer of 2006, the USDA Forest Service along with its partners, Davey Resource Group, Society of Municipal Arborists, and The National Arbor Day Foundation, launched the i-Tree suite of software applications to help communities determine the value of their trees.

The i-Tree suite is a compilation of four software applications that can help communities manage and assign monetary value to their street tree population, park or open space trees, or the entire urban forest, as well as help them prepare for debris clean up after natural disasters. Trees provide real services for us by shading our property and streets to reduce energy costs, intercepting rain water to reduce the amount and flow rate, and taking pollutants into their leaves. This suite is a result of over 25 years of urban forest research conducted by the U.S. Forest Service looking at each of these environmental services. These models can calculate the amount of energy that is saved, the quantity of storm water that is intercepted, and the amount of air pollution that is removed from the air by the trees in the community and affixes a monetary value to them. By knowing what tree species a community has, their size, and the environmental benefits they provide as a whole, a community can plan and manage their resources to ensure those benefits long into the future.

The U.S. Forest Service will be conducting an i-Tree pilot project in Berkeley Lake in early April 2008 to train urban forestry professionals to use the various applications. The two day training event will show professionals how to plan and set up a project, collect the necessary data, use those data to run the models, and generate necessary reports needed for planning and forest management. For being the testing ground for this project, Berkeley Lake will get an assessment of its street trees and its entire urban forest conducted by professional arborists at no cost. Approximately eight, 3-person teams will fan-out over the streets of Berkeley Lake on those two days to collect the data.