Dear landowner,

A network of urban forest inventory research plots has been established across the United States. These research plots are selected randomly by position on a nationwide grid, regardless of ownership. One of these research plots is located on the property you own. We would like to access this property to collect urban forest inventory data on this research plot.

What is a plot?

An inventory plot covers about 1/6 of an acre, is circular, and is 98 feet in diameter. There are 200 plots within the political boundaries of each major city with additional plots located in the greater metropolitan area.

How often will the plot be visited?

The plot will be visited once every 5 to 7 years. It usually takes less than a day for the urban inventory crews to complete their work. Also, on about 5 percent of the plots, a second crew may revisit the plot shortly after the first crew finishes their work, as a part of our quality assurance program.

What data will be collected on these plots?

- Tree species—what trees species exist and what are most abundant?
- Tree numbers and tree size—Is the urban area losing or gaining trees. How quickly are trees growing? Larger trees produce larger energy savings, filter more air and water pollutants, and provide more shade.
- Tree survival and mortality—How well are trees surviving in the urban area?
- Tree crown condition—tells a lot about the health of a tree, how well it's growing, and its impact on plants growing underneath.
- Tree damage—helps identify species with damage to develop effective management plans.
- Invasive plants—abundance, distribution, and effects on urban areas
- Ground cover—the existence of other plants, and permeable (gravel, bare soil) and impermeable surfaces (asphalt, cement) to learn more about water infiltration potential and runoff.
- Ownership—will help integrated management strategies across ownerships.

What are the benefits of an urban forest inventory?

Urban trees and natural spaces are critical to human health and well-being. A neighborhood's trees moderate air and water pollution, reduce heating and cooling costs, and provide shade and shelter from the hot summer sun. Healthy trees can provide wildlife habitat and improve real estate values. Research shows that trees improve mental health, strengthen social connections, and reduce crime rates. We can all appreciate these benefits, and the more we know about the trees in our cities and towns the better we can nurture them and sustain their benefits.

Will the data collected on my property kept confidential?

By law, the plot location and owner's name will be kept confidential and data will be presented only in statistical summaries. Data collected on urban FIA plots cannot be accessed through the Freedom of Information Act. Information from a single owner's land will not be used for tax purposes, nor will it be used in regulation.

At times, we may share information with individuals or organizations we work with. These partners are required to sign a non-disclosure document and are held to the same confidentiality requirements as employees under the law.

Where can I get more information on the Forest Inventory and Analysis program and the urban inventory program?

Please contact us at the following address:

USDA Forest Service
Forest Inventory and Analysis Program
Northern Research Station
1992 Folwell Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55108
Telephone: (651) 649-5139

NRS Web page:
http://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/fia/

Urban forest inventory page:
http://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/fia/urban/

Or, visit our National Forest Inventory and Analysis Web page at:
http://www.fia.fs.fed.us