

DNR urban forestry interns from Southern University start summer experience in Milwaukee

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) welcomes two urban forestry summer interns to the agency’s Milwaukee office. The internship marks the beginning of a new collaborative program between the department, the USDA Forest Service and Southern University and A&M College, a public historically black land-grant university (HBCU) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

The two inaugural interns, Odell Kimble and Kolin Bilbrew, are juniors majoring in forestry at Southern University, the first and only HBCU that offers a degree in urban forestry. They will be working with the [DNR’s urban forestry program](#) for eight weeks this summer. Their projects will include assisting DNR staff with urban forest inventory work and helping plan an urban heat map.

“We’re pleased to support the career development and education of these two forestry students and hope that this partnership program will be a continued opportunity for future students,” said Heather Berklund, Chief State Forester with Wisconsin DNR. “This collaboration supports the shared goals of the DNR and the Forest Service to increase workforce development opportunities in urban forestry, with particular attention to underserved communities.”

Support for the two summer interns was provided by the USDA Forest Service through their partnership program “Educating the Next Generation of Leaders in Forestry, Environment, and Natural Resources” with Southern University, under the direction of Dr. Zhu Ning.

“We would like to take this opportunity to thank Wisconsin DNR and Southern

University for their efforts and commitment in making this internship program a reality,” said Beatra Wilson, Assistant Director for Urban & Community Forestry, USDA Forest Service State & Private Forestry. “This partnership between the Wisconsin DNR and Southern University reflects the USDA Forest Service’s mission to promote diversity and inclusion by creating a diverse workforce as we seek to grow the next generation of conservation stewards that reflect our society.”

In 2021, Gov. Tony Evers signed an [Executive Order](#) pledging to protect and restore Wisconsin’s forestland by conserving 125,000 acres and planting 75 million trees – with 1 million of those trees in urban areas – by 2030 as part of the [U.S. Chapter of the Global Trillion Trees Initiative](#).

In most U.S. cities, the distribution of urban tree canopy disproportionately benefits high income neighborhoods. A tree planting program targeting low-income urban communities would help to address inequity.

Urban tree planting combined with enhanced tree maintenance can substantially increase urban forest carbon storage and deliver additional carbon mitigation benefits through energy savings.

Like electricity and water, an urban tree canopy is part of a community’s infrastructure. Well-managed urban forests provide services such as energy conservation, economic vitality, improved air quality, reduced stormwater runoff, carbon sequestration and enhanced beautification.

Learn more about the partner groups here:

- **Wisconsin DNR - Division of Forestry** <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/-topic/forestry>
- **U.S. Forest Service - Urban and Community Forestry Program** <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf>
- **Southern University - Urban Forestry and Natural Resources** <https://www.subr.edu/subhome/urban-forestry-and-natural--resources>