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CONTACT: Logan Nelson, Stoughton Tree Commission Member, 608-290-7181

SUBJECT: Stoughton Honored for Stewardship of its "Green Infrastructure" at Tree City USA Ceremony

MADISON – Representatives of Wisconsin's 162 Tree City USA communities and 12 Tree Line USA utilities across Wisconsin gathered on March 9 at Madison's Monona Terrace Convention Center to be recognized for their stewardship of their communities' trees – their urban forest. Tim Berndt, Todd Fossum, Logan Nelson and Pat Ready of the Stoughton Tree Commission received Stoughton's 12th Tree City USA Award and their 9th Growth Award. Stoughton Utilities Director, Robert Kardaza and System Supervisor, Craig Wood, received Stoughton's 5th Tree Line USA Award.

Over 350 mayors, council members, staff and volunteers attended as Tree City USA communities and Tree Line USA utility companies were recognized and presented awards at the ceremonies in Madison by DNR Secretary Scott Hasset.

To be recognized as a Tree City USA, a community must meet four requirements. It must have a designated tree board or forestry department, an annual forestry budget of at least \$2 per capita and a tree care ordinance. The community also must host an Arbor Day Celebration and Proclamation.

Wisconsin ranks third in the nation with its 162 Tree City USA communities. The group includes five new Tree City USAs (DeForest, Elkhorn, Johnson Creek, Mineral Point and Washburn) and 24 existing Tree City USA communities that received Growth Awards for going above and beyond the standards for Tree City USA.

The benefits of urban forests were recently highlighted in new research published by the USDA Forest Service, which found that Wisconsin communities receive three dollars in benefits for every dollar spent planting and maintaining community trees.

"Urban forests are a critical part of a community. We call it "green infrastructure," said Dick Rideout, Department of Natural Resources state urban forestry coordinator. "The services trees provide in energy savings, air pollution reduction, storm water runoff reduction and increased property values outweigh the costs to maintain them by three to one," Rideout says. "This doesn't even include the benefits to local business or the psychological and social benefits provided to residents that are harder to quantify."

"Urban forests are invaluable to the quality of urban life and are home to over 80 percent of Wisconsin's population," says Rideout. "The tree canopy softens downpours allowing rain to soak gradually into the ground where it can

recharge local aquifers and in the process reduce flooding, pollution and sedimentation in rivers and lakes."

In an age of increasing energy costs, trees also can positively impact energy needs say foresters. They convert sunlight into stored energy instead of heat, provide direct cooling through transpiration and evaporation, shade and insulate buildings. This reduces the need both for heating and air conditioning.

In fact, researchers found that trees in the yard can save up to 20 percent on annual air conditioning and 2 percent in winter heating costs.

The urban forest also helps maintain clean air by removing 53 tons of carbon dioxide and 430 pounds of air pollutants annually for every 100 trees in a community.

Trees also muffle noise and provide places to rest meet and socialize. Among the many benefits of maintaining a sustainable urban forest are the economic benefits. Research shows that people linger and shop longer along tree-lined streets. Apartments and offices in wooded areas rent more quickly and have higher and longer occupancy rates. Each large tree can increase a house sale price by one percent and a large specimen tree can add 10 percent to property values.

"Tree City USAs are the leaders in stewardship of community and natural resources," says Rideout.