

Thinking outside the bark: adapting i-Tree for international urban and rural forestry projects in developing countries

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ABSTRACT

The i-Tree suite of tools, developed by the US Forest Service and partners for assessing and valuing urban and rural forests, has helped thousands across the globe strengthen community tree and forest management, advance new policies and improve advocacy efforts. Although the international i-Tree user base and application options have expanded significantly in recent years, options for users in developing countries may be limited for complex reasons including lack of resources, technical challenges, conflicting priorities, and unattainable required data. Thus, developing countries that are facing rapid urbanization pressures, deforestation, and climate change threats may benefit the most by an i-Tree analyses, but are less likely to use the tools.

A more strategic, innovate and step-wise approach to using i-Tree in developing countries offers accessible and achievable options, and a pathway to more complex analyses. Innovative i-Tree users in the Philippines, Mexico and other countries have overcome barriers by focusing on what is achievable and adaptable such as applying i-Tree Canopy to assess land covers, understand threats and build consensus for action. Further, i-Tree users in developing countries have focused on non-ecosystem service options such as structural analysis, maintenance recording, mapping and outreach initiative to apply i-Tree successfully.

This session will share case studies and lessons learned from global i-Tree users working with i-Tree in developing countries and resource-limited cities, who were able to advance objectives and implement policy changes to protect natural resource protection initiatives to protect land, property and people.

BIOGRAPHY

After starting as a volunteer, **Al Zelaya** has spent 20 years working in urban forestry, arboriculture, and natural areas restoration and management. Since 2008, Al has worked as an urban forester in Chicago at the Davey Institute, the company's main research, development and innovation division. His responsibilities include development, research, training, and providing technical support for domestic and international i-Tree projects. Previously, Al was a Regional Urban Forestry Coordinator for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and worked as a Forester for the Lake County Forest Preserves in Northern Illinois. Al is an ISA certified arborist and has a BA from DePaul University.