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CTASLA Presents Connecticut Olmsted Award to State Urban Forester, Chris Donnelly

New Haven, CT — The Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (CTASLA) has presented its annual Connecticut Olmsted Award to Chris Donnelly, Urban Forestry Coordinator for the State of Connecticut.

The Olmsted Award, named after Connecticut native Frederick Law Olmsted, who founded the modern landscape architecture profession in the 19th century, is given annually by CTASLA to an organization or person from Connecticut who has employed the principle of stewardship of the environment as a guiding force in their actions.

"Through his efforts as urban forester, promoting the value of trees and other green infrastructure, Chris has contributed to a better quality of life here," said Barbara Yaeger, ASLA, Connecticut chapter president. "He's helped so many in Connecticut appreciate what trees do for us, and how much we will need trees and nature as life on this planet moves forward."

After earning his Master's degree in Forestry from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Donnelly, a resident of Northford, worked in the lumber industry, as a licensed arborist, and as a tree care consultant before joining the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (now DEEP) as an urban forester in 1998.

The philosophy and practice of urban forestry — the care and management of tree populations in urban and community settings to provide environmental, economic, and social benefits — was just beginning to take root at the time. "It was an opportune time for me to begin working with people and organizations, helping to build the program, the ideas, and the enthusiasm that would contribute to the good progress that we've made in Connecticut since," says Donnelly. In 2000, he was appointed as Urban Forestry Coordinator for the State of Connecticut, a position he still holds today.

As the primary contact for urban forestry efforts within the DEEP, Donnelly administers two urban forestry grant programs — the America-the-Beautiful grant program for municipalities and non-profits, and the Outreach grant program for non-profits. He also runs the Tree City USA program for Connecticut, and coordinates efforts to combat emerald ash borer and other threats to Connecticut trees and forests. Donnelly is a member of the State Vegetation Management Task Force,

which was called upon to examine street tree-planting and tree-trimming standards in response to recent winter storms that devastated the power grid in many communities.

He is also chair of the Urban and Community Forestry Committee of the Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters, and has been a past chair of the Connecticut Urban Forest Council. His writings over the years for publications such as *Connecticut Woodlands* and *Connecticut Wildlife* have helped to educate many about the importance of trees.

As a director of the Connecticut Tree Protective Association for nearly 20 years (and a past president), Donnelly has run CTPA's "Arboriculture 101" course, a series of classes to prepare prospective arborists for the daunting Connecticut arborist licensing exam. "It is always a thrill to meet former students who are now licensed and on their way to a successful career in caring for trees," he says.

"I am a true believer that what happens on the ground is what counts — that policies and priorities only matter to the extent that they influence the person in the field with a saw or a shovel. Outreach and education — *communications* — has always been a large part of what I try to do."

Frederick Law Olmsted is best known for his creation of New York's Central Park as well as such prominent Connecticut landscapes as Bridgeport's Beardsley and Seaside Parks, New Britain's Walnut Hill Park, and Hartford's Pope Park. He is buried in Hartford's Old North Cemetery.

Past recipients of the CTASLA Connecticut Olmsted Award have included Senator Joseph Lieberman (1997); the Green Valley Institute (2004); State Senators Bill Finch (2005) and Andrew Roraback (2007); James Gustave Speth, Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies (2009); William DeMaio, Director of the New Britain Parks and Recreation (2013); and State Representative Terry Backer (2014). (For a full list of recipients, see <http://olmstedlegacytrail.com/olmsted-award>.)

Founded in 1899, the American Society of Landscape Architects is the national professional association for landscape architects, representing more than 15,000 members. Landscape architecture is a comprehensive discipline of land analysis, planning, design, management, preservation and rehabilitation. ASLA promotes the landscape architecture profession and advances the practice through advocacy, education, communication and fellowship.

Learn more about landscape architecture online at www.asla.org. For more information on activities of the Connecticut Chapter, please see our website at www.ctasla.org.

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