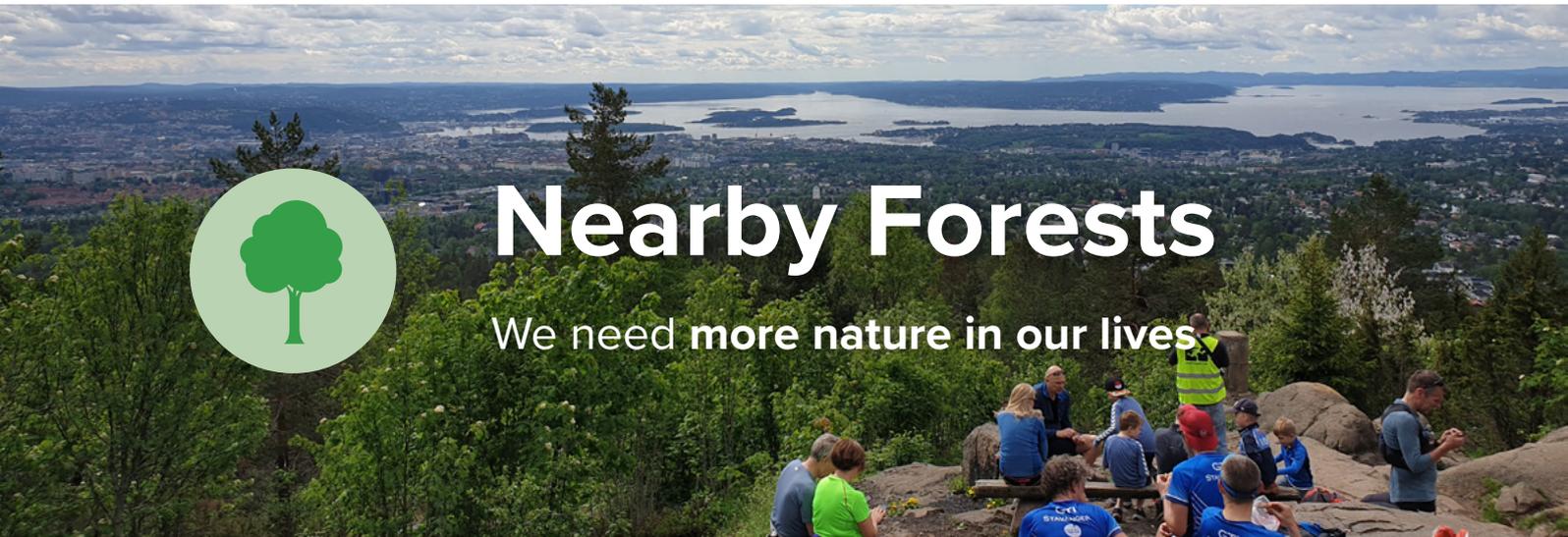




Nearby Forests

We need more nature in our lives



Nearby forests underpin the existence of many of the world’s great cities by filtering water, reducing flooding, supplying timber, storing carbon, cleaning the air and providing access to nature and recreation for many urban residents. From greenbelts hugging the outskirts of cities to mountain forests a hundred miles away, nearby forests play an underappreciated role in supporting city life.

Some of the most well-known examples of nearby forests include the Catskill and Delaware watersheds, which provide 90% of water for 9.5 million people in New York City; the Cantareira Water Supply System, which supplies water for the 22 million residents of São Paulo, Brazil; and the Aberdare Range “water tower” forests that supply much of Nairobi’s water and more than half of Kenya’s electricity through hydropower.

But despite their importance nearby forests are often threatened by competing land use and development needs, especially for energy, unsustainable timber harvesting, land for agriculture, and urban expansion. Nearby forests can exist on both public and private land, often outside a city’s immediate jurisdiction. As a result, they are often managed by diverse stakeholders who need to be engaged in planning for how these forests should be protected and managed.

Benefits

Water security is one of the primary benefits of nearby forests for cities downstream. Healthy forests can act like a sponge, absorbing water from rainfall when it is plentiful and slowly releasing it into subterranean water courses during drier times. Well-managed nearby forests help to provide a sustainable and predictable supply of downstream water in rivers and reservoirs. In addition to water quantity, nearby forests can enhance water quality by reducing erosion and filtering out pollutants, helping to purify water that emerges in streams and rivers downstream and lowering treatment costs for city water utilities. This function can also help reduce costs for hydroelectric producers by bolstering reservoir capacity and extending the longevity of turbines and other built infrastructure.

Nearby forests can also contribute to cleaner air in cities by removing particulate matter. Healthy nearby forests can help to reduce the impact of other natural disasters, like landslides, by reducing soil erosion and helping to retain soil stability on slopes. When managed correctly, nearby forests can be a source of sustainable local timber for building projects in cities. Finally, because of their proximity to cities, nearby forests offer abundant recreation opportunities – such as hiking and camping – for people wanting to escape the city.



What Cities4Forests Offers

Cities4Forests provides technical assistance to cities on how to sustainably manage, conserve and restore their nearby forests through our networks of peer cities, technical partners and experts.

Cities can access technical support on a range of different topics that relate to nearby forests including planning, policies, finance and stakeholder engagement. We offer this support through our online working groups, facilitated discussions, trainings, phone consultations, case study presentations and peer-to-peer visits. Specific topics include:

- 1. Guidance on when, why, and how to support nearby forests:** evaluating research and conducting economic analyses: Cities require strong evidence to justify when, where, and how to invest in nearby forests. Cities4Forests offers assistance in conducting economic analyses and applying the newest science. This includes support on how to make the economic and business case to key decision-makers (water utilities, major water users, infrastructure investors) for forests and other “green” infrastructure alongside built “gray”, or built, systems.
- 2. Business models and financing approaches for nearby forests and natural infrastructure:** We advise on business models and financing approaches for forest restoration, conservation and sustainable management including public-private partnerships and other avenues to raise capital and operational funding towards acceleration of natural infrastructure solutions.
- 3. Financing guidance:** We provide technical assistance to help projects become bankable and access finance and connect with investors. Cities4Forests provides support on how to access financing for implementation (e.g., Water Funds, Green Bonds, Pay for Performance Approaches, and Forest Resilience Bonds). This includes getting city projects “investment ready”.
- 4. Support for source-water protection programs:** We evaluate key success factors and enabling conditions for source-water protection, particularly systems where downstream beneficiaries pay for upstream services. These findings are applicable to utilities, land-use planners, departments of environment, NGOs and other city actors.
- 5. Guidance on building partnerships and governance structures (e.g., with water utilities, downstream companies):** Cities4Forests provides guidance in building, operationalizing and sustaining partnerships between cities, utilities, recreational industry, downstream companies, and other stakeholders as a means of getting to scale and expanding budget resources. We provide best practices and case studies based on past experiences.



Contact Information

For more details on what Cities4Forests offers, visit cities4forests.com/forests/nearby
Contact our nearby forests lead: **Todd Gartner** | todd.gartner@wri.org