

The Grove Expansion Plan

December 2010 – December 2011

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MS&L

Advisors. Advocates. Activists.

Situation Overview

The Grove's main website (www.AmericanGrove.org) and online community (www.AmericanGrove.org/thegrove) bring together tree and nature enthusiasts from across the Southeast to encourage people to plant trees and protect the urban tree canopies within in both large metropolitan areas and smaller communities. To accomplish this goal, site visitors are encouraged to read articles, post comments and share tree-planting experiences within the general community and their state group pages. This online engagement can transfer into the offline world as members plant trees in their yards and around their communities. Members are also encouraged to participate in sustainable activities such as recycling.

The Grove began as a website and online community called that Georgia Grove specifically for Georgia residents. Due to the success of the initial site, the U.S. Forest Service provided funding to expand the online community with Georgia Forestry Commission and Georgia Urban Forestry Council leading the effort. The first phase of expansion included 13 Southeastern states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

People in these areas are embracing The Grove. In its first three months, more than 350 people became members of The Grove online community, exceeding the original goal of securing 300 charter members. Members have uploaded 320 photos of tree, nature and hobby-related subjects. More than 30 articles have been posted to the community's blog. Members are participating in online discussions through their state group pages and attendance at local events across the region has increased by 15 percent.

Opportunity

Based on the success of The Grove and interest expressed by forestry leaders throughout the county, the online community is being expanded to 37 additional states along with Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and Washington, D.C.

As with the current site, members can upload pictures, videos and captions of their tree planting experiences; discuss tree-related issues with other members; and view tree planting events happening in their communities. They also have the ability to build connections and become actively involved with their local forestry nonprofit organizations. These connections lead to greater awareness of the importance of trees, improved conservation efforts and, potentially, donations that can help fund future programs.

MS&L recommends the following expansion program for The Grove that will bring state sites online throughout the course of 2011 and provide steady promotional opportunities at both the state and national levels.



Timeline

The next 40 states and territories will be rolled out in four groups of 10, with one group per quarter starting in January 2011 (i.e., first quarter is January through March, second quarter is April through June, third quarter is July through September and fourth quarter is October through December).

The month of December 2010 will be spent preparing for the site expansion. During this time, MS&L will reserve URLs for all 40 states and territories and establish hosting for the additional sites. For each state or territory, MS&L will purchase the .org and .com URLs – if available – to use for the state information page. For example, MS&L would purchase www.OhioGrove.org and www.OhioGrove.com. Both URLs redirect to www.AmericanGrove.org/OH (the hosting location for the site), but www.OhioGrove.org will be the web address used on Ohio's state-specific Grove logo.

Also during December 2010, the following activities must occur on the client-side:

- U.S. Forest Service must prioritize the states and territories into four groups of 10 states and territories
- Representative from U.S. Forest Service and/or National Association of State Foresters to contact state forestry agency or council point-person for all states and territories, especially those in the first group, to introduce The Grove and MS&L project manager
 - MS&L will provide e-mail template for this communication if needed
 - Reminders need to be sent to state representatives in the following groups one month prior to the start of website development
- U.S. Forest Service will create a steering committee to oversee the creation of The Grove and make final decisions on advertisers and content moving forward

Below is the sample timeline of the activities that will occur during each 13-week quarter. We will repeat this schedule three times to complete development for the four total groups.

Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L begins drafting copy for the 10 state information pages ▪ MS&L works with web designers and in-house designers to start development of state information pages and logos for state groups in the Ning community
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L continues drafting copy for the 10 state information pages ▪ MS&L conducts conference call with state representatives to explain process and answer questions
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L project manager contacts state forestry agency or council point-person to provide copy for review and approval; requests logos and PayPal link
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L project manager sends reminder to point-person that approval is needed by end of Week 5 (Note: Only two editing sessions will occur and no response will be taken as no changes are needed and copy is approved) ▪ MS&L makes edits and resubmits state information page copy to state point-person for approval as needed
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L continues making edits and resubmitting state information page copy to state point-person for approval ▪ MS&L sends approved state information page copy to web designers

Timeline (continued)

Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L continues to send approved state information page copy to web designers ▪ Create CafePress store for each of the 10 state/territories
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L reviews comps of state information pages for designers and provides edits to web designers, if necessary
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L continues to review comps of state information pages for designers and provides edits to web designers, if necessary
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L sends comps of state information pages to state point-person for approval (Note: No response from the state will be taken as no changes are needed and layout is approved) ▪ MS&L asks web designers to make final edits and resubmit comps for approval as needed
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L continues to ask web designers to make edits and resubmits comps for approval as needed ▪ MS&L conducts conference call with state representatives to answer questions about the launch
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L to launch state information pages and state groups in the Ning community ▪ MS&L to add information on new states to donations and state selection pages on the main site
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L troubleshoots as needed
Week 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MS&L troubleshoots as needed

Roles and Responsibilities

GUFC

- Provide prioritized list of the 10 states/territories in each of the four groups
- Provide contact information for point-person in each state/territory
- Send introductory e-mail to states describing The Grove and introducing MS&L
- Provide approval of standard state information page copy

MS&L

- Purchase URLs for state information pages
- Draft and edit state information pages and get point-person approval
- Develop design of state information pages and logos

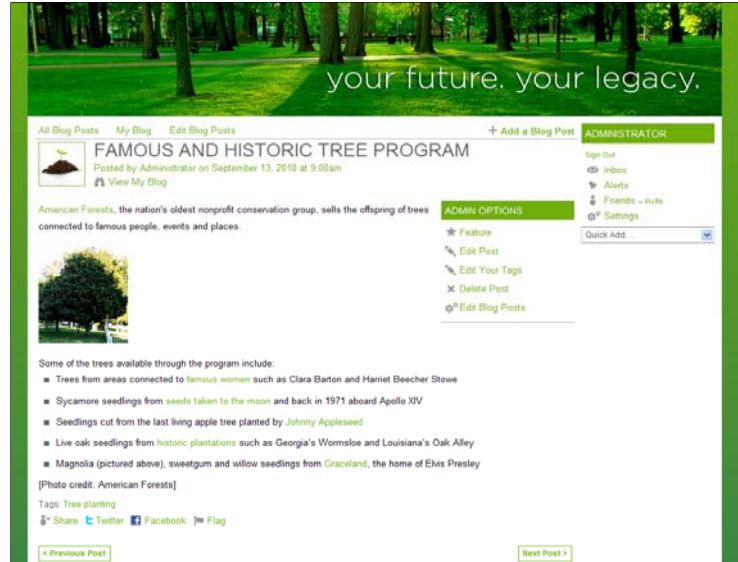
States

- Provide edits and approval to MS&L for state information pages (NOTE: No response is taken as approval by the point-person)
- Provide state forestry agency and council logos
- Provide online donation information (PayPal, link to web page, etc.)

Content

Research on online community participants shows that new content is one of the key reasons for members and visitors to return to a website. Throughout 2011, MS&L will continue to create weekly blog posts for the Ning community and moderate content posted by members. New blog posts are scheduled for display on Mondays at 9 a.m. The blog provides an opportunity to attract visitors interested in broader green topics; demonstrate the expertise of federal, state and local forestry experts; share some of the key activities and initiatives happening in the states; and highlight projects and individuals that support urban forestry initiatives.

The blog posts, like other items posted by the administrator, can be promoted through the @PlantYourLegacy Twitter feed.



MS&L will draft blog posts as information and news is available. The Grove steering committee will be a partner in creating content ideas and editorial calendars. Members of The Grove can create their own blog posts, but these posts must be approved by the site administrator before they are visible on the site. However, information posted to State Grove group pages is the responsibility of the state point-person. Comments and discussions on State Grove group pages become live immediately.

A sample editorial calendar of blog topics is below. The topics will be updated to accommodate additional states as they are added to The Grove.

Week	Topic
3-Jan-11	▪ Resolutions for 2011 related to trees
10-Jan-11	▪ Commemorative planting example
17-Jan-11	▪ Spotlight on Florida trees to celebrate Florida Arbor Day (Jan. 21); state tree: Sabal Palm
24-Jan-11	▪ Spotlight on Louisiana trees to celebrate Louisiana Arbor Day (Jan. 21); state tree: Bald cypress
31-Jan-11	▪ Legislative update
7-Feb-11	▪ Spotlight on Mississippi trees to celebrate Mississippi Arbor Day (Feb. 11.); state tree: Southern Magnolia

Content (continued)

Week	Topic
14-Feb-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spotlight on Georgia trees to celebrate Georgia Arbor Day (Feb. 18); state tree: Live Oak
21-Feb-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spotlight on Alabama trees to celebrate Alabama Arbor Day (last full week of Feb.); state tree: Longleaf Pine
28-Feb-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commemorative planting example
7-Mar-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring break planning: Links to family-friendly outdoor activities throughout region
14-Mar-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spotlight on North Carolina trees to celebrate North Carolina Arbor Day (March 18); state tree: Pine
21-Mar-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spotlight on Arkansas and Tennessee trees to celebrate Arkansas and Tennessee Arbor Days (AR: March 21, TN: March 25); AR state tree: Pine; TN state tree: Tulip Poplar
28-Mar-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spotlight on Oklahoma trees to celebrate Oklahoma Arbor Day (last full week of March); state tree: Eastern Redbud
4-Apr-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spotlight on Kentucky trees to celebrate Kentucky Arbor Day (April 1); state tree: Tulip Poplar
11-Apr-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spotlight on Texas and Virginia trees to celebrate Texas and Virginia Arbor Days (April 29); TX state tree: Pecan; VA state tree: Flowering Dogwood
18-Apr-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five ways to celebrate Earth Day (April 22)
25-Apr-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five ways to celebrate National Arbor Day (April 29)

Roles and Responsibilities

GUFC

- Provide MS&L with background information to develop blog posts, based on feedback from The Grove steering committee
- Review and approve blog posts on a monthly basis (sent for approval on 15th of previous month)
- Address technical issues from members

MS&L

- Research, draft, edit and post blog posts
- Moderate content from members (photos, videos, blog posts and comments)
- Address technical issues from members

States

- Provide background on state-specific blog posts to MS&L
- Post and moderate content on State Grove group page

Promotions Strategy

The promotions strategy focuses on four areas: Utilizing existing online channels, empowering states to take ownership of The Grove and their state group, creating unique experiences available only on The Grove and reaching out to members of the national media.

Existing online channels we will tap into include:

- Purchasing online advertising on websites such as Discovery Network's Treehugger.com and PlanetGreen.com and specialty LOHAS publications like *Yoga Journal*
- Purchasing Facebook social ads that target people who have identified themselves using LOHAS terms (trees, green, recycle, social justice, health, environment)
- Utilizing Twitter via @PlantYourLegacy
- Reaching out to green bloggers and other bloggers that focus on LOHAS issues

States receive the most value from the site by including it as an integral part of their communications activities. They can post upcoming events, send messages to members, share photos from activities and receive online donations. We will engage the nonprofit forestry council in each state by providing the following:

- A promotional toolkit that includes a "How To" guide for outreach, banner ad for states to include on forestry websites to link to The Grove, sample letter to send to supporters and branded, reusable grocery bags
- A sponsorship toolkit that outlines state group page and main site advertising opportunities
- Distribute e-mails on an as-needed basis to alert state contacts to upcoming site-wide activities such as membership drive contests similar to the one being held from September to November 2010



Providing content and experiences that can only be found on the website will give LOHAS consumers a reason to join – and return to – the community. Possible events include:

- Hosting an "Ask an Arborist" Q&A session during each quarter
- Providing new content on the site on a weekly basis
 - Content examples include blog posts, event postings, photos, event-related graphics on the home page
- Hosting tree planting events in select cities with high concentrations of LOHAS consumers
 - Tentatively named "Branch Out with The Grove"
 - Partner with state forestry council, city tree association and/or MomsLikeMe.com to involve children in the activities
- Partner with publication to host contest for best original photography
 - Winner's photo gets published in magazine or one publication website

Promotions Strategy (continued)

Reaching out to members of the national media with a pitch that is both creative and newsworthy can result in stories that increase awareness of The Grove with the general public. A list of sample media and sample pitches is located in the next section. Ideas for creative ways to reach out to the media include:

- Sending tree seedlings or saplings or eco-friendly consumer goods (if appropriate)
- Scheduling media tours with The Grove spokespersons

Roles and Responsibilities

GUFC

- Facilitate @PlantYourLegacy Twitter account
- Participate in online and in-person events as applicable

MS&L

- Manage online ad campaign
- Create and distribute promotional and sponsorship toolkits
- Conduct national media outreach

States

- Follow directions listed in promotional and sponsorship toolkits
- Schedule local “Branch Out with The Grove” events
- Post local events on The Grove “events” section

Media Outreach Strategy

The media outreach efforts of MS&L will focus on national publications, broadcast and online blogs. Local media outreach will be the responsibility of the individual states. Our target media include environment and conservation reporters as well as green bloggers.

National daily newspapers with environmental reporters:

- *Boston Globe* – Beth Daley, Environment & Conservation Reporter
- *Chicago Tribune* – Michael Hawthorne, Environment Reporter
- *Houston Chronicle* – Matthew Tresaugue, Environment & Conservation Reporter
- *Los Angeles Times* - Margot Roosevelt, Environment Staff Writer
- *Miami Herald* – Curtis Morgan, Environment & Conservation Reporter
- *New York Times* - Erica Goode, Environment Editor
- *Philadelphia Inquirer* – Sandy Bauers, Environment Reporter
- *Washington Post* – David A. Fahrenthold, Environment Staff Writer

National magazines:

- *Arbor Day* – Woodrow Nelson, Editor
- *Awareness* – Darby Davis, Publisher & Editor
- *Better Homes & Gardens* – Doug Jimerson, Garden Group Editor in Chief
- *E/The Environmental Magazine* – Brita Belli, Editor
- *Family Circle* – Jennifer Ash Taylor, Managing Editor
- *OnEarth* – Janet Gold, Managing Editor
- *Organic Gardening* – Therese Ciesinski, Managing Editor
- *Sierra Magazine* – Avital Binshtock, Lifestyle Editor
- *Working Mother* – Sheri Arbital Jacoby, Managing Editor

National blogs:

- Green (*The New York Times*) – Staff bloggers
- Green House (*USA Today*) – Wendy Koch
- Greenspace (*The Los Angeles Times*) – Bettina Boxall
- G Living – Sarah Backhouse
- Got2BeGreen – Jeff Kart
- High Impact Mom – Amanda Henson
- Mother Earth News – Heidi Hunt
- Post Carbon (*The Washington Post*) – Juliet Eilperin
- Treehugger (Discovery) – Alex Pasternack

National broadcast television:

- Disney Channel Friends for Change – Project Green
- Fine Living Network/FLN – It's Easy Being Green with Renee Loux
- Green.tv (online) – Verity Cowper, Editor
- NBC "Today Show" – Tammy Filler, Senior Producer
- Planet Green (Discovery) - Focus Earth with Bob Woodruff

Media Outreach Strategy (continued)

Outreach to national media focuses on the larger issues facing urban and community forestry and how The Grove ties into these issues. National pitch topics include some of the following:

- **Expansion of The Grove:** Announce expansion to all states and three U.S. territories and explain the rationale behind the site being created
- **Urban forestry movement:** Outline the issues contributing to the growing importance of tree conservation groups in small to mid-sized metropolitan areas and describe The Grove's role in bringing communities together online
- **Technology and forestry:** Provide U.S. Forest Service and/or National Association of State Foresters spokespersons with opportunity to discuss how tools – like The Grove – are changing how forests are managed in different areas of the country
- **Trees increase property values:** Provide statistics and case studies about the typical increase in both residential and commercial real estate values due to the presence of trees and green space
- **Tree planting:** During tree planting session in late winter, discuss commemorative tree plantings done on personal and large scale and highlight tree selection tool on The Grove

Although the emphasis of our outreach will not be on the local level, we will continue to collaborate on state efforts and assist in the development of localized pitch ideas. Examples of media outreach that state contacts can engage in include:

- Sending local reporters an invitation to join The Grove
- Including a mention of The Grove in regular updates sent to reporters from the forestry agency's communications department

Roles and Responsibilities

GUFC

- Provide background information on possible pitch topics
- Participate in telephone and/or in-person interviews

MS&L

- Conduct outreach to national media

States

- Provide background information on possible pitch topics
- Conduct outreach to local and state media

Measurement and Budget

To order to generate enthusiasm for and drive traffic to The Grove, a partnership among U.S. Forest Service leadership, state forest agency staff, state forestry nonprofit council staff and the MS&L team members must be created. The specific goals used to measure success for the expanded online community include:

- Increase traffic to the community to 10,000 by the end of 2011
- Recruit 75 members for each new state grove group within six months of its launch
- Increase total membership in The Grove to 4,000 by the end of 2011
- Secure three national media feature articles during 2011

One way to determine the success of The Grove and to measure the return on investment is to track activity on the website. Items to track for both the main site at www.AmericanGrove.org and the online community at www.AmericanGrove.org/thegrove include:

- Number of visitors to the website
- Number of page views
- Average number of pages viewed per visit
- Average time spent on the site
- Geographic location of most visitors
- Web location most users come to site from
- Number of members in The Grove community
- Total number of photos uploaded
- Number of Twitter followers

Additional reporting can be provided to The Grove steering committee on a monthly or bi-monthly schedule as needed.

Budget for the expansion:

Descriptions	Accruals	Fees	Expenses	Balance
Funding from U.S. Forest Service	\$220,000	0	0	\$220,000
Administrative Fee for GFC	0	0	\$20,000	\$200,000
GUFC Site Administration including salaries and supplies	0	0	\$14,000	\$186,000
* Plan Development	0	\$4,000	\$0	\$182,000
Design & Development of 40 State/Territory Landing Pages in groups or by priority area	0	\$23,400	\$29,200	\$129,400
Purchase .orgs for URLs	0	\$750	\$1,200	\$127,450
Content Development for 40 State/Territory Landing Pages, Community Blog	0	\$45,700	\$3,000	\$78,750
Community Moderation and Maintenance	0	\$10,000	\$1,500	\$67,250
Promotions	0	\$22,500	\$10,750	\$34,000
Online Advertising	0	\$4,000	\$24,000	\$6,000
Sponsorship Outreach	0	\$5,000	\$1,000	\$0
Total	\$220,000	\$115,350	\$104,650	\$0

* The \$4,000 allotment for plan development has already been spent to create this planning document.