

ABSTRACT

Heritage tree programs serve communities by recognizing and protecting significant trees. Despite the benefits of these programs, little research has investigated contributing factors in heritage tree planning policy. Through analysis of descriptive data generated from a survey questionnaire sent to professionals and those in elected or appointed services that might directly inform heritage tree policy, this research measured the regulatory environment in the Rocky Mountain/Interior Plain Province region of Montana, Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming, and sought to establish a regional "current state" baseline in designating significant trees. Only 7% of respondents answered that their local government has a heritage tree program, while half of the respondents indicated they were unaware of the possible benefits of such programs. Heritage tree programs were only found in cities having a staff arborist/forester and a college or university. Within professions, support for heritage tree programs was highest among arborists and lowest among landscape architects/designers, and was consistently higher for programs on streets/parks than for those on private property. These findings suggest that although a majority of those surveyed support Heritage Tree policy implementation, efforts to increase awareness, promote advocacy, and administer incentives in public sector services could well determine the success or failure of a Heritage Tree program.