

THE STEWARDSHIP MAPPING AND ASSESSMENT PROJECT

What is STEW-MAP?

Across the country, people are planting and caring for trees, establishing community gardens, planning river cleanups, and organizing many other community greening efforts. As people work together to create stronger, healthier, greener, and more resilient communities, they become the stewards of their local environment. These acts of stewardship critically contribute to the care of natural resources and the well-being of communities across urban and rural areas. Knowing about the individuals and groups that care for natural resources provides the potential for governments, nonprofits, and other organizations to leverage stewardship capacity in powerful ways to achieve outcomes that would otherwise be impossible with finite resources.

The Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project (STEW-MAP) is a research tool, community organizing approach, and partnership mapping platform developed by scientists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northern Research Station that answers the question, “Who takes care of the local environment?” STEW-MAP provides insights that local government and civic groups can use to enhance the capacity of local stewardship activities. This tool can foster civic participation, increase neighborhood social cohesion, and support requests for funding and programming. A better understanding of environmental stewardship in urban and rural areas can lead to less duplication of efforts and better coordination of land and resource management. First launched in New York City in 2007, STEW-MAP has since been implemented in more than 15 locations across the world.



Civic stewards care for the local environment in O’ahu, Hawai’i
Courtesy photo by State of Hawai’i Division of Forestry and Wildlife.

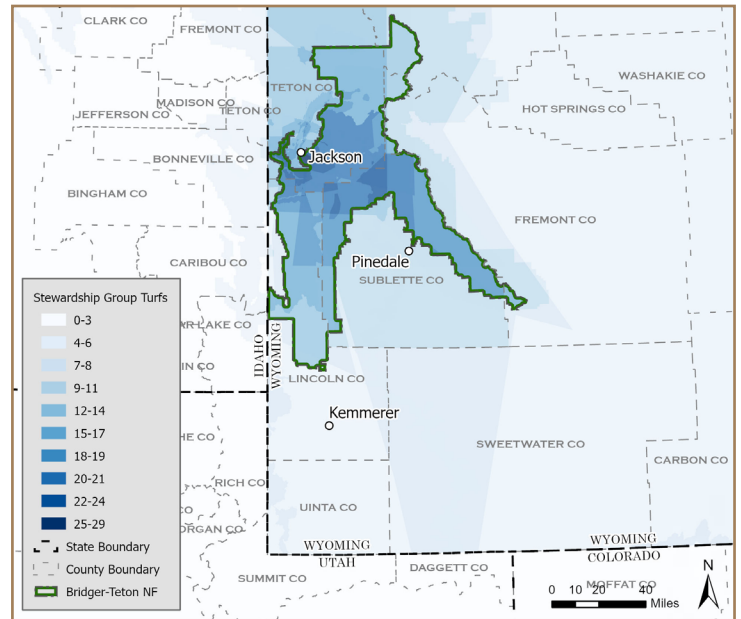
What can STEW-MAP data tell us?

Stewardship data collected through STEW-MAP tell us about the presence, capacity, spatial distribution, and social networks of environmental stewardship groups in a given city or region.

- Stewards persist over time—Stewardship groups have evolved along with the social, political, economic, and environmental histories of our cities.
- Stewardship comes in all shapes and sizes—Stewardship territory ranges in scale from a single tree, to a watershed, to an entire region.
- Stewardship groups do not just focus on the environment—Stewards hail from many different sectors, including public health, social services, transportation, education, and housing. Yet, these groups all share the belief that the environment can be a catalyst for social change.
- Stewards are agents of change—Stewardship groups work on everything from protecting natural areas from development, to helping people get outside to exercise, to forming empowering friendships and civic ties. Collectively, these efforts can transform our environment and communities.

How can these data be used?

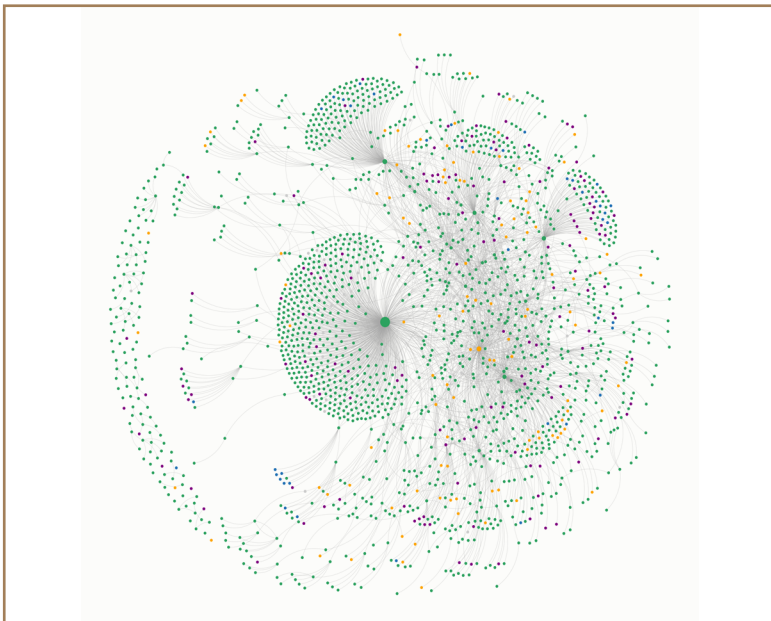
The data collected in STEW-MAP studies produce a publicly available online tool that allows users to visualize and query data on a region's civic environmental stewardship resources. Scientists, planners, funders, and other civic stewards can use the data to better understand and support networks of stewards and help communities, governments, and nonprofits understand the social fabric of a landscape. STEW-MAP helps public land managers make more informed decisions with local partners and civic stewards in mind and can accelerate coordination, collaboration, and synergies across mixed ownerships and among diverse groups.



STEW-MAP was used to map and track partnerships across the Bridger-Teton National Forest.

How STEW-MAP data have been applied:

- STEW-MAP data, paired with an Urban Tree Canopy Assessment, helped New York City (NYC) Parks to successfully reach its goal of planting and caring for one million trees as part of their MillionTrees NYC campaign.
- Researchers and stewards in O'ahu, Hawai'i, used the STEW-MAP data collection process to create space for broadly inclusive civic groups to connect and discuss shared intentions and goals. Coalitions focused on local environmental issues such as Rapid Ōhi'a Death and fire management formed because of this process.
- The Bridger-Teton National Forest used the STEW-MAP process to understand how Forest Service staff partnered with community organizations within the region over time to better manage and strengthen their external relationships.



New York City collaboration network of stewardship groups in 2017.

To Learn More

STEW-MAP website:

<https://www.nrs.fs.usda.gov/stew-map/>

Step-by-step Implementation Guide:

<https://www.nrs.fs.usda.gov/STEW-MAP/steps/>

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Forest Service Research & Development and the Northern Research Station improves lives and landscapes. More information can be found here: <https://www.nrs.fs.usda.gov>



October 2021

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