



Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition

March 29, 2011

The Honorable Jack Reed
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski:

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUFC) represents city mayors, community nonprofits, national associations, nursery and landscape professionals, urban planners, city managers, public works professionals, arborists, utility professionals, foresters, scientists, and others nationwide. Working together since 2004, these diverse professionals monitor, care and advocate for urban trees and green infrastructure. Collectively, we are asking for your support for a \$32.4 million appropriation for the US Forest Service's *Urban and Community Forestry* (U&CF) program for FY 2012.

Urban forests are vital to creating and maintaining healthy, livable communities of all sizes. Trees in urban areas are a key component of sustainable green infrastructure and provide quantifiable ecosystem benefits to the 80% of Americans who live in urban areas. Urban forests enhance air and water quality, reduce energy use, enhance property values, and provide an array of health and wellness benefits to people. Creating and maintaining a healthy tree canopy also creates a substantial demand for green-collar jobs in a sector poised for rapid growth.

Since its expansion under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1990, the Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) program has been a catalyst and important technical advisor to promoting healthy forests in our communities. Delivered in close partnership with State Forestry Agencies, the U&CF program assists cities, suburbs, and towns to maximize tree canopy and resulting environmental services. In addition, the U&CF program provides critical assistance to help communities manage risk, respond to storms and disturbance, and contain threats from invasive pests.

In 2010 the U&CF program delivered technical, financial, educational, and research assistance to 7,102 communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories and affiliated Pacific Island nations. The program leveraged an additional \$40 million in state and local support and provided 1,250 small grants to local communities.

Urban and community forests make a significant contribution to the quality of life in communities across the country, and the Forest Service brings an impressive array of tools, resources, and expertise to promote urban and community forests.

By absorbing large amounts of harmful pollutants, shading buildings and cooling the air, trees play an important role in air quality and energy efficiency. ***SUFC supports the \$2 million funding request in the President's FY12 Budget for U&CF for energy programs.***

The SUFC also ***supports investing \$18 million for urban natural resources research through Forest Service Research and Development.*** This request is consistent with the recommendations of the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council to increase the Forest Service's investment to \$24 million for urban natural resources research by the year 2015. This program pioneered research on the effects of urban trees on air quality and quantified the effects of trees on temperature reduction, removal of air pollutants, reduced energy consumption, and the role of urban trees in reducing green house gas emissions.

Urban forests are integral to any community striving to reinvest in itself, encourage active, healthy citizens, and create a healthier and more sustainable environment with smart green infrastructure. ***While SUFC is seeking to expand funds for urban forestry and green infrastructure up to \$100 million, we understand the current economic conditions of the country and requests \$32.4 million be allocated in FY12 to the Urban and Community Forestry program, consistent with the President's request.***

For further information or questions, please contact Gerry Gray, American Forests at 202-737-1944 or ggray@amfor.org.

Sincerely yours,

Alliance for Community Trees
American Forests
American Nursery and Landscape Association
American Planning Association
American Public Works Association
American Rivers
American Society of Consulting Arborists
American Society of Landscape Architects
Arbor Day Foundation
International Society of Arboriculture

Keep America Beautiful
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of State Foresters
Society of Municipal Arborists
Tree Care Industry Association, Inc.
Utility Arborist Association
National Recreation and Parks Association
Davey

***Cc: House Interior-Environment Appropriations Subcommittee
Senate Interior-Environment Appropriations Subcommittee***