



April 10, 2014

The Honorable Ken Calvert  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim Moran  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member Moran:

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUFC) represents nonprofits, national associations, nursery and landscape professionals, public works professionals, arborists, 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 several programs under the Interior Subcommittee's jurisdiction that support urban forests and green infrastructure.

Urban forests are vital to creating and maintaining healthy, livable communities of all sizes. Trees growing in populated areas are a key component of community infrastructure and provide proven benefits to more than the 80% of Americans who live there. Urban forests enhance air and water quality, reduce energy use, increase property values, and provide quantifiable 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.

### **USDA Forest Service**

Since the passage of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1990, the Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) program has been a catalyst and provided important technical assistance for promoting healthy forests in our communities. 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 2013, the U&CF program delivered technical, financial, educational, and research assistance to 7,292 communities and nearly 198 million people, over 60 percent of the U.S. population. 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. ***The SUFC understands the current economic conditions of the country and recommends FY15 funding be allocated at FY2012 enacted levels for the Urban and Community Forestry program at \$31.3 million.***

The Forest Service's Forest and Rangeland Research program is essential in providing support for urban forestry research activities focused on understanding conditions and trends in our

nation's urban and community forests and in providing tools and best management practices to community groups and urban forestry practitioners. Forest Service researchers and partners have made huge strides in recent years in developing new technologies and tools, such as the i-Tree program, for mapping the urban forest and to understand the current situation and future trends. Similarly, agency researchers have been helping policymakers and practitioners to understand the environmental, economic, and social services that trees and forests provide. ***The SUFC urges Congress to provide funding for the Forest and Rangeland Research line item at \$303 million.*** This reflects \$231 million for basic forest research, consistent with the FY 2012 enacted level, and \$72 million for Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA). We also call the Subcommittee's attention to our collaborative efforts with the Forest Service to make progress toward incorporating urban forest assessments into the agency's FIA program. ***We urge the Subcommittee to encourage the Forest Service to make strong efforts to integrate urban forests into FIA so that its critical data-collection efforts on our nation's forests include the estimated 100 million acres of urban forest lands.***

Finally, the SUFC wishes to thank Congress for the report language it included with the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014, which encourages the Forest Service to maintain a strong urban forest research program. While there is no budget line item for urban forestry research, the Forest Service has recognized Urban Natural Resources Stewardship as one of seven Priority Research Areas within its overall Forest and Rangeland Research program. ***We urge the Subcommittee to continue including such language in its Interior Appropriations reports as a reflection of Congress' interest in strong urban forestry research in the absence of a budget line item.***

Exotic pests and invasive species are among the greatest threats to urban forests. Trees in our towns and cities are at risk from non-native insects and diseases such as the emerald ash borer and Asian longhorned beetle. Non-native pests already cost city governments \$2 billion each year to remove and replace trees they have killed. Homeowners in these communities pay another \$1 billion per year to remove dead trees from their own properties. The substantial loss of trees in our communities also impacts the quality of life and property values. Funding for the Forest Health Program supports activities related to prevention, suppression, and eradication of insects, diseases, and plants as well as conducting forest health monitoring through pest surveys. ***SUFC supports no less than FY 2012 funding levels of \$111 million (of which \$48 million was directed to cooperative lands) in FY 2015 for the USDA Forest Service Forest Health Management Program.***

### **Environmental Protection Agency**

All forests play vital roles in delivering clean water to communities of every size. Urban and rural forests offer fiscally-sound green solutions to the management of stormwater, water storage, groundwater recharge, and pollutant reduction. Green infrastructure is a cost-effective and resilient approach to stormwater infrastructure needs that provides many community benefits: improving water and air quality; reducing energy use and mitigating climate change; improving habitat for wildlife; reducing a community's infrastructure cost and promoting economic growth.

SUFC supports the EPA’s goal of strengthening green infrastructure activities to further sustainability goals by incorporating green infrastructure and enhancing stormwater management. SUFC also supports efforts to expand the use of green infrastructure to meet Clean Water Act goals through the Clean Water State Revolving Funds (CWSRF). ***SUFC supports the President’s FY 2015 request of \$5 million to strengthen green infrastructure activities, and the FY 2014 enacted level of \$1.449 billion for CWSRF.***

The Urban Waters Federal Partnership is a 13 interagency coordinated effort helps stimulate local economies, create jobs, improve quality of life, and protect health by revitalizing urban waterways and the communities around them, focusing on underserved urban communities of all sizes. ***SUFC supports appropriating FY 2015 funding to the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, coordinated by the Environmental Protection Agency Office of Water.***

### **Land and Water Conservation Fund**

SUFC supports full and dedicated funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), including funding for the State and Local Assistance Program. ***We support the FY 2015 budget request which calls for permanent authorization of \$900 million in mandatory funding for LWCF programs in the Departments of Interior and Agriculture beginning in 2016.*** During the transition to permanent funding in 2015, the budget proposes \$350 million in discretionary and \$550 million in permanent funding, shared by the Departments of Interior and Agriculture. This includes discretionary funding for State Assistance grants at \$48.1 million, which includes \$3 million for “Competitive Grants.”

### **The National Park Service**

The reestablishment of the Urban Parks Recreation and Recovery (UPARR) program within the National Parks Service, proposed to be funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, is essential to bring nature to the urban communities. These competitive grants focus on engaging and connecting communities, especially young people, to their neighborhood parks through projects that would revitalize and rehabilitate park and recreation opportunities. ***SUFC supports the President’s FY 2015 request of \$25 million from LWCF for the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR).***

Sincerely,

Alliance For Community Trees  
American Forests  
AmericanHort  
American Planning Association  
American Public Works  
American Rivers  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
Arbor Day Foundation  
Davey Tree Foundation  
Keep America Beautiful  
International Society of Arboriculture  
National Association of Clean Water Agencies

National Association of Conservation Districts  
National Association of State Foresters  
National Recreation and Parks Association  
Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee  
Outdoor Power Equipment Institute  
Professional Landcare Network  
Sacramento Tree Foundation  
SavATree Consulting Group  
Society of American Foresters  
Society of Municipal Arborists  
The Nature Conservancy  
Tree Care Industries Association