



March 27, 2008

MAIL MERGE/House and Senate Members

Re: Urban and Community Forestry Program FY 2009 budget

Dear MAIL MERGE:

I am writing to express collective opposition to the USDA Forest Service's proposed FY 2009 budget for the Forest Service's *Urban and Community Forestry* program. The President has proposed a cut of 82% to the Urban and Community Forestry program from last year's levels.

Fifteen national associations and over 150 state and local organizations (see attached) strongly object to the President's proposed cuts to Urban and Community Forestry. Members of the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition represent city mayors, community nonprofits, nursery and landscape professionals, public works professionals, planners, city managers, arborists, utility professionals, and more, nationwide.

We urge you to request a budget of \$50 million in FY 2009 for the Urban and Community Forestry program and to direct the Forest Service Research and Development section to provide \$8 million in research funding for urban natural resources research.

Urban forests are vital to the health of cities and affect quality of life for over 80% of Americans who live in urban areas. Urban forests promote air and water quality, reduce energy use, enhance property values, and provide an array of health and wellness benefits to people. In the last two years, major cities like New York, Los Angeles, Denver, and Baltimore have launched ambitious tree planting and care campaigns because of the significant value that trees provide to the health and sustainability of cities.

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 Urban and Community Forestry program assists cities, suburbs, and towns to better manage tree canopy to provide environmental services to cities. 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.

The U&CF program delivers technical, financial, educational, and research assistance to communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and eight U.S. territories. 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 this nation's efforts to promote urban and community forests.

In FY 2007, the U&CF program assisted 6,326 communities serving a population of more than 162.3 million. This program has pioneered research on the effects of urban trees on air quality and quantified the effects of trees on temperature reduction, removal of air pollutants, and reduced energy consumption. US Forest Service research has quantified the value trees provide through energy savings from direct shading, evapotranspiration, and wind breaks, resulting in lower utility bills and reduced peak energy demand.

The U&CF program has also provided valuable technical expertise to federal and state agencies to help support those agencies' objectives. Forest Service researchers have been working with air quality experts at the US EPA, and with several state agencies, to help fulfill air quality standards through the planting of urban trees to improve air quality. As a result, several states are including urban tree canopy retention and growth as a voluntary compliance measure in their State Implementation Plans. The U&CF program also provided assistance to the Department of Housing and Urban Development in revising its HOPE VI program to encourage green space and street trees in the design of low and mixed-income housing.

Finally, the U&CF program is making a significant contribution to this nation's efforts to reduce greenhouse gases by conducting research and providing technical assistance regarding the role that urban trees play in both reducing green house gas emissions and in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

For further information or questions, please contact Alice Walker Ewen, Alliance for Community Trees at 301-277-0040.

Sincerely yours,

Alliance for Community Trees
American Forests
American Nursery and Landscape Association
American Planning Association
American Public Works Association
Arbor Day Foundation
International City/County Management Association
International Society of Arboriculture
Keep America Beautiful, Inc.
National Association of State Foresters
Society of Municipal Arborists
Tree Care Industry of America
TreeLink
US Conference of Mayors
Utility Arborists Association