



---

April 10, 2006

Dear ACT Member,

As part of our work to represent the interests of our members at the national level, the Alliance for Community Trees invites your organization to sign onto the attached coalition document **in support of the Urban and Community Forestry budget in FY 07.**

The Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry program provides technical and financial assistance nationwide, delivered via State Forestry Agencies. So, **if you've ever received a cost-share grant from your State, or received technical assistance from your state urban forest coordinator**, chances are good that those things were supported through the federal budget in the Forest Service's line item for Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF).

**Effective congressional outreach involves as many people and organizations as possible.** That's why ACT is a member of the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition, a group of national associations and organizations with an interest in urban forestry. We're pleased that groups like the US Conference of Mayors, American Society of Landscape Architects, and American Public Health Association agree that the urban and community forestry program is important.

**The truth is that the federal Urban and Community Forestry Program is at stake.** Funding has been steadily cut in recent years -- since a program high of \$36 million in 2003, the funds have declined to \$26.8 million now in the President's 2007 budget. Already, we are hearing from states that recent cuts are hurting U&CF programs, resulting in dramatic cuts to cost-share grants for local communities.

**If we don't speak out, who will?** Professional foresters, community tree advocates, and natural resources professionals know the tangible benefits that the Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program has provided to their communities. Please add your voice to strengthen the message.

**Please consider:**

- 1) **Signing on** to the attached document. Sign-ons by local and state organizations show that an issue has broad support in many districts.
- 2) **Meeting** with or phoning your congressional offices to express your support for the attached document.
- 3) **Distributing** this document to your local and regional networks w/ cover letter from you inviting their sign on.
- 4) **Asking** your local members and volunteers to phone or meet their elected officials to express support.

Talking points are attached for your discussions with lawmakers. If you have questions, please contact Alice at ACT. After you meet with elected officials, please e-mail a debrief so we can track progress.

Thanks for your help in pushing for greater awareness of the U&CF program in Congress this year.

Sincerely,

Joan Lionetti  
Policy Committee Chair

Alice Ewen Walker  
Executive Director

Alliance for Community Trees  
5010 Sunnyside Ave, Ste 305  
Beltsville, MD 20705

tel 301-220-2251  
fax 301-220-2281  
cell 301-379-5303  
[alice@actrees.org](mailto:alice@actrees.org)  
[www.actrees.org](http://www.actrees.org)

## Talking Points for Local Members' Meetings with Lawmakers

\$50 million for the U&CF Program is, we recognize, an aggressive request in the current budget climate. However, we believe it is important to talk about the real need for this program, and our long-term goal of increasing support to build healthy urban forests for all communities.

In talking about this program with lawmakers, we suggest the following (in your own words):

1) **Stop any further cuts to the program.**

2) **The real need for the U&CF Program is \$50 million.** That's why I support the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition's position (hand them SUFC FY'2007 document).

**Why \$50 million?** **A.** Growing the program includes bringing it back up to \$36 million to support the nationwide delivery of the program via state agencies. This is important for serving all sizes and types of communities, from cities to villages. **B.** Beyond \$36 million, we see a need for targeted increases to focus on metropolitan area Tree Canopy Initiatives, as well as to enhance technology transfer and education. Already, several cities (Baltimore, for example) have set tree canopy goals to help solve water quality issues, air quality problems, and other issues that impact human health.

3) **Research has delivered tremendous gains w/ minimal funding.** Enhancing the agency's investment in UF research **from its current \$3.5 million to \$6 million** will allow existing stations to serve more states and regions, and provide enhanced research capacity for the fast-growing West and South, where urban research investments are now small.

4) **Allocate funds within FIA to assess urban forest health.** We support full funding for Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA\*) and think that FIA should start integrating urban forests into the picture of what's happening to our nation's forest resources.

\*FIA is the 'tree census' of the nation. It indexes the health of America's forests. Currently urban forests are excluded from the FIA – we think urban forests are important enough that the Forest Service should assess them, the way the agency does with rural forests. The Forest Service U&CF program recently piloted methodologies for integrating urban forests into the FIA process.

### General Tips:

- Assume that you are talking to a smart person who knows nothing about the topic.
- Connect the local to the national. Give an example of how the federal program has benefited your district or state. (grants, technology, training, etc)
- Keep it simple. Repeat your message. Leave them with a clear request for action.
- Offer yourself as a resource and seek to build a long-term relationship.