



Briefing on the Federal Urban and Community Forestry Program

The Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) program is a USDA Forest Service technical and financial assistance program authorized by the 1978 Cooperative Forest Assistance Act, amended in the 1990 Farm Bill. Authorities for the program are fairly flexible and consistent with other cooperative programs. There is no legislated cap on how large a budget Congress may award the program.

The 2002 Farm Bill was passed with no amendments or changes made to the Urban and Community Forestry program. In 2007, the administration will seek a Forestry Title that addresses statewide forest planning, landscape scale forestry projects, wood-to-energy technologies, and community-owned forests. There may be opportunity for an urban dimension to these initiatives, particularly regarding the acquisition of forests in the suburban interface. No changes to the authorities of the U&CF program are proposed by the Administration.

Each year, Congressional Sub-Committees for Interior Appropriations determine the US Forest Service's State and Private Forestry program budget, which includes Urban and Community Forestry. Recent funding levels for the federal Urban and Community Forestry program were:

FY 2008	17.4 million	<i>President's Budget 2/5/07.</i>
FY 2007	30.1 million	
FY 2006	28.4 million	
FY 2005	32 million	(+ a \$17 million supplemental for Hurricane Recovery)
FY 2004	34.9 million	
FY 2003	36.0 million	
FY 2002	36.0 million	
FY 2001	32.1 million	
FY 2000	31.3 million	
FY 1999	30.5 million	
FY 1998	26.8 million	

Cuts to the program have resulted in less funding to state and local programs and reductions in national and regional investments.

The program underwent considerable assessment in 2004 and 2005, resulting in a new performance reporting and allocation methodology that began to be implemented in FY 2006. In 2004, Surveys and Investigations prepared a report on the program for the US House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations. Also in 2004, a ten year program assessment was released, identifying five areas of challenge for the program – 1) financial accounting/reporting procedures, 2) accountability for program reporting requirements, 3) reaching non-traditional and underserved groups, 4) integrating U&CF with other Forest Service programs, and 5) providing national leadership in the field.

ACT Policy Recommendations

The Alliance for Community Trees supports FY 2008 funding of \$50 million for Urban and Community Forestry. We believe more must be done by the Forest Service to assist major metropolitan areas in understanding, managing, and benefiting from urban ecological resources. Strategic forest preservation, streamside buffers and urban tree canopy are critical to making our cities healthier and more sustainable.

A \$50 million budget for the U&CF program would enable:

- 1) Restoring capacity to the state cooperative program, which serves all localities (\$36 million)
- 2) Enhancing national and regional technology transfer and education efforts (\$2 million)
- 3) Launching a metropolitan areas tree canopy restoration initiative in 12-15 cities (\$12 million)

Program References:

USDA Forest Service U&CF Program Mission Statement

The USDA Forest Service and State Forestry Agencies, in partnership with national and local organizations provide a comprehensive approach to the stewardship of urban trees and forest resources. This approach helps ensure the vitality of communities by engaging people where they live, work, and play. The Urban and Community Forestry Program provides financial and technical assistance to plan, protect, establish, and manage trees, forests, and related resources. The outcome is to restore and sustain the health and quality of the natural and human environments in urban areas.

The most recent U&CF Program Accomplishment Report is posted at <http://www.fs.fed.us/ucf/>:

Authority for the Urban and Community Forestry Program US Code, Title 16, Chapter 41, Section 2105

"The Secretary is authorized to provide financial, technical, and related assistance to State foresters or equivalent State officials for the purpose of encouraging States to provide information and technical assistance to units of local government and others that will encourage cooperative efforts to plan urban forestry programs and to plant, protect, and maintain, and utilize wood from, trees in open spaces, greenbelts, roadside screens, parks, woodlands, curb

areas, and residential developments in urban areas. In providing such assistance, the Secretary is authorized to cooperate with interested members of the public, including nonprofit private organizations. The Secretary is also authorized to cooperate directly with units of local government and others in implementing this section whenever the Secretary and the affected State forester or equivalent State official agree that direct cooperation would better achieve the purposes of this section."

Complete legislation (aka "the Farm Bill" or "Cooperative Forestry Act") authorizing and outlining the U&CF program is available at: <http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/16/2105.html>

History of the Urban and Community Forestry Program

The federal government formally recognized urban and community forestry as early as 1962, when the President's Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission identified urban forestry as a separate issue. In the 1960's, Ladybird Johnson brought national attention to America's green legacy, hosting a White House Conference on National Beauty and promoting an ethic that culminated in Congress passing the Highway Beautification Act. Two years later, under the leadership of Deputy Chief Philip Thornton, the US Forest Service proposed the creation of a program dedicated to urban forestry. Congress first authorized the creation of the program in 1972, but provided no funding to support its operation. It was the 1978 Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA) that truly brought the program into being, with annual funding hovering around \$3.5 million until 1984, when the program was cut down to just \$1.5 million nationwide.

The 1990 Farm Bill broke new ground for urban and community forestry by amending the Cooperative Forestry Act to provide a minimum level of funding of \$30 million per year from 1991 to 1995. Also known as the Forest Stewardship Assistance Act, this was the first time that a forestry title was included in a Farm Bill. In addition to amending the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act, the legislation authorized rural forestry programs such as Forest Legacy and Forest Stewardship.

What Does the Urban and Community Forestry Program Fund?

Some of what the U&CF program has funded:

- USFS staff to provide technical assistance and program administration at the federal and regional level
- State level staffing to deliver technical and financial assistance, including U&CF Coordinators, Volunteer Coordinators, and other critical functions performed by state forestry agencies
- Federal cost-share grants for municipalities and community non-profits, administered by state forestry agencies

- National cost-share grants and administration for the National Urban Forest Advisory Council (NUCFAC), an entity mandated by the 1990 Farm Bill.
- National investments such as the National Urban Forest Conference, the *Tree City USA* recognition program, and coordinated efforts around national issues such as technology transfer, training, or inter-agency initiatives.
- Pilot and demonstration projects that develop and test new management tools, protocols, and restoration models. Examples include i-Tree software, a tree inventory and analysis tool collaboratively developed by the U&CF Program, Forest Service Research, and private industry.

How is Urban Forest Research Funded?

Forest Service Research is funded through a separate Research and Development (R&D) budget within the Forest Service (\$283 million in FY 06). Urban forest research is not a separate line item but is part of the overall research budget. The Forest Service invested about \$3.5 million in urban forest research nationally in FY '07. In spring of 2002, the Forest Service cut funding to urban forest research by about \$250,000 as part of an overall strategy of budget reduction impacting all areas of research.

Alliance for Community Trees Talking Points on U&CF Research:

- Enhancing urban forest research capacity to \$6 million in FY 08 is a key priority for ACT members.
- Research stations at Syracuse, NY; Davis, CA; Chicago, IL; and Burlington, VT are producing valuable research on urban forest functions and benefits and deserve greater support.
- Expanding urban research efforts to focus on the rapidly developing cities of the south and far west is also important. Stations at Riverside, CA, Athens, GA and Gainesville, FL may offer opportunities for enhancement.

How Can I Take Action?

- Alliance for Community Trees provides electronic action updates via our “NeighborWoods Network” e-newsletter, which you can sign up for at www.actrees.org. These alerts provide step-by-step directions, letter templates, and specific talking points for advocacy.
- Cultivate relationships with elected officials to build their understanding of urban natural resource issues in their community.

* The Farm Bill offers a vehicle for creating authorities and direction for programs, not for funding them (mandatory funding within the Farm Bill is possible, but unlikely.) It is possible to authorize programs within the Farm Bill, which are later never funded. For instance, the last Farm Bill authorized a new Forest Service cooperative Watershed Forestry Program, which Congress has declined to fund in annual budget appropriations.