

Written Testimony
Alice Ewen Walker, Executive Director,
Alliance for Community Trees
March 26, 2009

FY 2010 Budget
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

Regarding the USDA Forest Service Budget

Executive Summary

The Alliance for Community Trees (ACT) is a national nonprofit alliance of 160 organizations from 40 states, dedicated to urban forest protection and care. Together Alliance for Community Trees affiliates have planted 14.9 million trees in cities with help from 4.3 million volunteers. Alliance for Community Trees urges the Subcommittee to:

1. **Appropriate \$100 million for the Urban and Community Forestry Program.** There is tremendous resource pressure on urban forests, as invasive species, catastrophic storms, and land development impact quality of life in cities and towns. With over 83% of the population living in urbanized areas, urban natural resources play a critical role in the health of the American people and the livability and function of US cities.

An expanded Urban and Community Forestry Program should include the following:

- State agency technical and financial assistance to build local capacity and deliver core federal program (\$50 million)
- Volunteer coordination to engage the public in forest restoration, invasive pest monitoring and stewardship in 150 cities. (\$10 million)
- Assessment and monitoring of urban tree canopy in 150 cities (\$12 million)
- Functional Community Forest grants to demonstrate the strategic use of shade trees to respond to specific local needs such as energy demand reduction, stormwater mitigation, air quality compliance, revitalization of blighted property, or other targeted benefits. (\$14 million)
- Enhanced technology transfer and public information, coordinated across Forest Service regional units and research stations. (\$2 million)
- Focused investments made in 10-15 major cities to devise science-based tree canopy targets, set strategies to maximize ecological service benefits, and monitor environmental, economic, and social impacts of urban natural resources in cities. This project will complement Forest Service efforts in Urban Long Term Research Areas. (\$12 million)

2. **Provide \$8 million in combined research support for Forest Service research on urban ecosystems.** The Forest Service funds roughly \$6.2 million in research on urban forests as part of the overall Research & Development budget. We recommend the agency increase its investment in research on urban natural resources issues to reach \$24 million by the year 2012. In FY 2010, ACT recommends a budget of at least \$8 million to research the function, value, and benefits of urban forests and to learn how urban forests can be managed to maximize environmental service benefits.

 3. **Appropriate \$140 million for the USDA Forest Service Forest Health Management Program.** We urge the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies to appropriate adequate funding for the USDA Forest Service to manage non-native insects and plant diseases that threaten America's forests. The USDA Forest Service plays a critical support role by providing both management expertise and critical research – in close coordination with APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine and through cooperative funding agreements with state forestry, state departments of agriculture and state Land Grant Universities.
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Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

The Alliance for Community Trees is a national coalition of 160 non-profit organizations and local government forestry programs from 40 states, dedicated to urban forest protection and care. Across the country, our member organizations work with the public to plant and care for community trees and to cultivate awareness of the essential value of trees for healthy and livable cities. Alliance for Community Trees members have engaged 4.3 million volunteers to plant 14.9 million trees in cities nationwide.

We value the leadership, technical resources and financial assistance that the USDA-Forest Service provides through its Urban and Community Forestry Program. Working in partnership with state agencies, grassroots community organizations and local governments, the U&CF Program has leveraged \$3 for every \$1 of federal support provided.

Urban forests are extremely important to the health of our people and the future of US cities. With leadership from the Forest Service, urban forests can be better managed and utilized to address the following concerns:

- **Public Health:** Access to trees, green spaces, and parks promotes greater physical activity, reduces stress, and reduces asthma risks.
- **Climate:** Trees cool ambient temperatures in cities, reducing emissions. Urban trees sequester 22.8 million tons of carbon per year – a service worth \$3.8 billion annually.
- **Energy:** Tree windbreaks reduce residential heating costs 10-15%, while shading and evaporative cooling from trees can cut residential cooling costs 20-50%.
- **Water:** Urban forests are efficient stormwater management systems that can help cities reduce infrastructure and water treatment costs.

- **Air:** Trees produce oxygen, intercept airborne particulates, and reduce smog.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Increasing tree cover by 10% in New York City would meet over 1/3 of the city's federal air quality compliance needs for ground level ozone.
- **Risk Management:** Professional urban forest management contains threats in the "urban interface"—such as invasive species, exotic pests, and fire—that pose a risk to forestlands.

The Forest Service is the premier forest research institution in the world. The agency is the key provider of research about the structure, function, and value of urban forests. In turn, the Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program is the primary conduit for applying this research knowledge at the field level. In recent years, the Forest Service has improved integration and cooperation between S&PF and R&D to produce tangible results for urban forest management. For instance, the agency produced I-TREE and STRATUM, software programs that use research algorithms to analyze the functional benefits that trees provide to a city.

The Forest Service's Role in Invasive Species Response

We urge the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies to appropriate adequate funding for the USDA Forest Service to manage non-native insects and plant diseases that threaten America's forests. We recommend an FY2010 appropriation of \$140 million for the USDA Forest Service Forest Health Management Program. This level is about \$17 million above the current level of funding. In addition, we ask that you provide an increase of \$3 million above the FY08 appropriations level for the "Invasives R&D" line item within the Forest Service Research program.

Our proposed funding levels would maintain at approximately current levels research aimed at improving detection and control methods for the emerald ash borer, hemlock woolly adelgid, sudden oak death (also called the phytophthora leaf and stem blight pathogen), gypsy moth, and other non-native forest pests and diseases. Funding at our recommended level would also allow expanded research on the *Sirex* woodwasp, which poses a serious threat to pine resources across the continent.

Our proposed significant increase in funding for the Forest Health Protection program is intended to allow expanding that program so that it may address several newly detected pests (such as the "1000-canker" disease killing black walnuts and the goldspotted oak borer in southern California) while simultaneously increasing efforts targeting the Asian longhorned beetle and maintaining programs that help contain the sudden oak death pathogen, emerald ash borer, hemlock woolly adelgid, *Sirex* woodwasp, laurel wilt disease, gypsy moth, wiliwili gall wasp, and ohia rust.

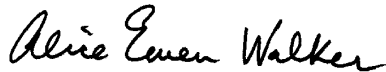
The agency bearing the principal responsibility for eradicating newly introduced forest pests is not the USDA Forest Service, but rather the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), an agency under the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Appropriations subcommittee. The USDA Forest Service plays a critical support role by providing both management expertise and critical research – in close coordination with APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine and through cooperative funding agreements with state forestry, state

departments of agriculture and state Land Grant Universities.

Nevertheless, the Subcommittee cannot achieve its goal of protecting the Nation's forests' health as long as funding shortfalls undermine USDA APHIS eradication programs. We encourage the Subcommittee to work with the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee to find ways to increase funding for forest pest line items in the USDA APHIS Emerging Plant Pest account.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alice Ewen Walker".

Alice Ewen Walker
Executive Director
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