



February 5, 2009

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
SH-503
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

Sent Via Fax
202-224-8858

Re: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
US Forest Service – State and Private Forest Lands – City Forests

Dear Senator Mikulski:

I am writing to express concern that the Senate version of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act does not include authorities for the US Forest Service to fund *city forest enhancements*. I ask that you consider offering an amendment to address State and Private Forest Lands under Title VII, Forest Service-Wildland Fire Management to match the House stimulus legislation.

The current Senate legislation provides \$350 million for State and Private Forest Lands, but restricts the use to hazardous fuels reduction and hazard mitigation activities in areas of high risk to catastrophic wildfire. Senator Bingaman's public lands amendment is similarly restrictive. While these are very important issues deserving of support, we believe the final legislation ought to take a broader view of forestry than the current bill proposes.

Maryland and other eastern states would be better able to participate if the language were amended to match the House stimulus legislation, which provided \$550 million for State and Private Forest Lands, including "city forest enhancements." This is a central concern for Baltimore and other cities engaged in sustainability efforts to plant trees.

The USDA Forest Service *Urban and Community Forestry Program* has documented a minimum of \$283 million in unfunded, shovel-ready projects that would provide tangible environmental improvement to cities nationwide while supporting green job creation.

Please consider offering an amendment to Title VII. Suggested language:

...The managers provide \$ ---- million to the Forest Service to create new jobs and help restore America's rural and urban forests and ensure selected facilities are safe, of which \$---- million is for State fire assistance hazardous fuels projects, volunteer fire assistance, cooperative forest health projects, city forest enhancements, and wood to energy grants on State and private lands. Further, cooperative programs shall not require matching funds."

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US Forest Service-State and Private Forestry delivers an excellent array of cooperative programs through state agencies and local partners. These programs are an efficient mechanism for delivering stimulus funds to on-the-ground, tangible improvement projects that support green jobs and restore the environment. State and Private Forestry programs operate across the landscape in both rural and urban areas.

Land restoration, tree planting in cities, wood waste utilization, fire risk reduction, and other forestry activities are labor intensive. In a recent economic analysis conducted by the State of California, it was found that over 75% of the cost of growing, planting and maintaining city trees is for labor. Planting just 6 million shade trees in California cities would create 9,750 jobs. Maintaining 6 million trees would create another 5,050 jobs.

By investing in public-benefit projects to enhance city forests, Congress will sustain the survival of many small and family owned businesses. Nursery sales and demand for landscaping and arboricultural services have dropped dramatically during the economic downturn. Plant sales have been especially impacted by the decline in new housing starts.

Well-managed urban forests enhance health and quality of life for people, provide green job opportunities for urban youth and adults, and support the small businesses that make up the nursery and landscape industry. City forestry programs engage residents in hands-on action to promote neighborhood revitalization and stabilization.

State agencies are prepared to deliver community assistance grants for city forests. Grants would go to local governments, nonprofits, small business, and educational institutions to: enhance and restore urban forest infrastructure and tree canopies, mitigate negative stormwater and heat island issues, reduce heat/air conditioning energy consumption, improve environmental health in underserved communities, attract new workers to the tree care industry, provide green job training, and utilize urban forest wood waste.


Inventory and data collection of urban forests in all 50 states would also support new jobs and provide a national picture of the condition, structure, function, and value of the urban forest resource. This baseline data is especially important to the 800+ cities that are expanding sustainability initiatives as part of their commitment to combat climate change.

Cities including Baltimore, New York, Boston, Denver, Seattle, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Indianapolis, Sacramento, San Francisco, Portland, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Charlotte and many more have created ambitious plans to plant millions of shade trees in urban areas. In California alone, the state has documented over \$65 million in unfunded projects, which could commence in 90 days or less. An existing network of local government and nonprofit agencies stand at the ready to implement tree planting and care projects should funds become available.

Alliance for Community Trees believes the USDA Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program is an excellent existing system for distributing one-time stimulus funds to the field for immediate implementation. We recommend a temporary suspension of cost-share requirements for these projects.

Thank you for considering the central role urban forests play in our cities and economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alice Ewen Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alice Ewen Walker
Executive Director

Headquartered in College Park Maryland, Alliance for Community Trees (ACT) is dedicated to improving the health and livability of cities by planting and caring for trees. With 160 grassroots affiliates* in 40 states and Canada, ACT engages volunteers to take action to improve the environment where 80% of people live – in urban areas. ACT member organizations have planted and cared for 14.9 million trees in cities with help from 4.3 million volunteers.

*Member organizations, for example, include Parks and People Foundation of Baltimore and Casey Trees of Washington DC, both of which engage communities to improve and re-green urban neighborhoods.

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