



January 30, 2009

Senator Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Dear Senator Feinstein:

California ReLeaf and the California Urban Forests Council represent 300 cities and counties, and close to 100 nonprofit agencies across the state engaged in urban forest protection, management and care.

We are writing to strongly urge you to include green infrastructure, specifically *city forest enhancements*, in the design of your economic stimulus package. Decades of research indicate that city trees provide essential services. Taxpayer dollars invested in the enhancement of city forests will provide multiple benefits in terms of urban green job creation and specialized training, pollution abatement, healthier and more livable neighborhoods, energy conservation, and long-term infrastructure savings in cities throughout the United States.

**Please consider providing \$550 million for US Forest Service State and Private Forestry programs, of which we recommend that \$150 million be allocated to urban forestry projects to enhance city forests nationwide.**

City forest stimulus funding should include:

**1. Community Assistance Grants for City Forests.** Grants to local business, nonprofits, non-traditional educational/training programs, and municipalities to: enhance and restore urban forest infrastructure and tree canopies, mitigate negative stormwater and heat island issues, reduce heat/air conditioning energy consumption, target underserved communities, generate outreach to attract new workers to the tree care industry, provide key job skill training, and generate a financial return from urban forest wood waste and products. Grants target underserved communities in cities and towns and provide jobs requiring a wide range of skill levels.

**In California alone, we have identified over \$50 million in “shovel ready” urban forestry projects that would provide thousands of green collar jobs for our State. These are unfunded projects that are already planned by local governments and community agencies which can be implemented within 90 days of the release of funds.**

**2. Urban Forest Assessment and Monitoring.** Inventory and data collection of urban forests in all 50 states will provide a national picture of the condition, structure, function, and value of the urban forest resource. This baseline data is key to effectively assessing and implementing the best urban forest management practices.

**With one-time funding, California's largest cities could efficiently collect and map tree inventory data by the end of Summer 2009, better preparing the state to act on our collective challenge to prevent tree canopy loss as part of the *California Climate Action Protocol*. Federal research from the Center for Urban Forest Research at Davis has found that for California cities to preserve the existing environmental benefits we now receive from urban trees, the state will have to plant 50 million trees by 2035.**

These stimulus investment recommendations can provide an immediate boost in diverse new jobs as well as long-term career training for the arboriculture and green industry. In addition, these dollars will provide a boost to local government and nonprofit job growth opportunities as tree care businesses, nonprofits, and local government collaborate in many communities.

California ReLeaf and The California Urban Forests Council believe 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 Congress include a temporary suspension of cost-share requirements for these stimulus spending projects.

More than 80% of Americans live in urban or urbanizing areas. Healthy urban forests and adequate green spaces in our cities are vital to the economic, social and environmental health of communities. Investment in these projects provide both a short-term stimulus boost and on-going long-term benefits. Thank you for considering the central role urban forests play in our cities and economy.

Sincerely,



Martha Ozonoff  
California ReLeaf



Nancy Hughes  
California Urban Forests Council