



Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition

January 26, 2009

Senator Harry Reid
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Thad Cochran
United States Senate
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
361-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Senator Daniel Inouye
United States Senate
722 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Dear Senators Reid, McConnell, Inouye, Cochran, Feinstein:

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition represents 20 diverse national organizations that promote healthy urban forests and green space in communities across the United States. More than 80% of Americans now live in urban or urbanizing areas. The importance of strategically designed and maintained green space in cities of all sizes grows every year. The opportunity for industry-related job growth and specialized skill training climbs in tandem.

The Coalition urges you to include green infrastructure*, specifically city forests, 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.

We support significant financial investments in city forests and tree-care industry related jobs through these proposed stimulus investments:

- \$3.5 billion for energy efficiency and conservation block grants
- \$500 million to capitalize the Green Jobs Act
- \$150 million for city forest enhancements from State and Private Forestry funding

City forest enhancements funding should include:

1. Community Assistance Grants. 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.

and

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.

It is also important to provide robust funding for green infrastructure (trees and vegetation) projects focusing on storm water management and urban parks and trails. City forests provide a natural water infiltration system that reduces stormwater run-off pollution and sewer overflow. Urban parks and trails provide many services to *all* urban residents from recreation to transportation.

These stimulus investment recommendations can provide an immediate boost in diverse new jobs as well as long-term career training for the tree care and green infrastructure 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.

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition 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 Congress include a temporary suspension of cost-share requirements for these stimulus spending projects.

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,

Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition

Alliance for Community Trees

American Forests

American Nursery and Landscape Association

American Planning Association

American Public Works Association
American Society of Consulting Arborists
American Society of Landscape Architects
The Davey Tree Expert Company
International City/County Management Association
International Society of Arboriculture
Keep America Beautiful
National Arbor Day Foundation
National Association of State Foresters
Society of Municipal Arborists
Tree Care Industry of America
TreeLink
Utility Arborist Association
US Conference of Mayors

**Green infrastructure* is a term used to describe how urban natural systems can replace or augment traditional grey infrastructure.