



**TEMPLATE LETTER**

**FROM ORGANIZATIONS  
TO ELECTED OFFICIALS**

**March 2007**

You may look up the fax number and committee assignments of your elected officials by visiting: [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) or [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov). Do not rely on surface mail or email to reach elected officials; fax is best. Surface mail is irradiated and takes too long; emails get ignored.

(Date)

**The Honorable** (Full Name)  
**United States** (Senate or House of Representatives)  
**Washington, DC** (20510 for Senate; 20515 for House)

**FAX:** (FAX #)

**Dear Senator** (Last Name):  
Or  
**Dear Mr. /Mrs. /Ms.** (Last Name, for a US Representative):

**Re: USDA Forest Service FY 2008 Budget**

I am writing to express (Organization Name's) concern over the President's FY 2008 budget for the US Forest Service **Urban and Community Forestry Program** and to urge greater investment in **urban forest research within the Forest Service Research and Development budget.**

(Organization Name) is dedicated to (mission statement). Since (year), (organization name) has planted ### trees and engaged ### community members in the protection and care of (city/region's) urban forest resources. (or other statement about how you've contributed to the betterment of the district/state). Trees are essential to the health and livability of our community (or communities) and provide a myriad of benefits to the citizens of (city/region.)

- The President's FY 2008 budget would reduce support for the Urban and Community Forestry program (U&CF) by 38% from the previous year, impacting all states and territories. U&CF is a successful and effective cooperative program that leverages \$3 for every \$1 in federal assistance provided. U&CF provides technical and financial assistance to communities to help localities assess, manage, and maximize the benefits trees provide to cities.
- Over the last 15 years, the Forest Service has eliminated nearly half of its full time research scientists. This reduction in research capacity makes it difficult for the Forest Service to respond to emerging issues and contemporary needs, including the rising demand for research about urban natural resources.
- It is unfortunate that at the very moment when the nation is experiencing a groundswell of local action to combat climate change, the Forest Service is reducing its urban forestry program. Urban forests help cities achieve ambient temperature reduction, reduce ground level ozone, and reduce energy demand for cooling and heating.

(Organization Name) supports the attached *Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition* recommendations urging **\$50 million for the Urban and Community Forestry Program** in FY 2008 and **\$6 million for combined urban forest research investments within the Forest Service R&D budget** in FY 2008. This request is supported by a wide variety of national and local organizations, including the US Conference of Mayors. (see attached)

(CITY/REGION) has benefited tremendously from the urban forestry technical and financial assistance provided by the US Forest Service. For instance, U&CF program assistance made possible \_\_\_\_\_. *(name something that a cost share grant or state technical assistance helped you do in your district – or cite how you have used USFS Research)*. A 38% budget cut to the federal U&CF program could mean the loss of 46 state technical assistance providers and the end of cost share grant programs in most states.

The Forest Service's urban forest research units and its U&CF program are the only federal investments that address the needs of cities to understand and manage urban forest resources.

Thank you for your leadership and investigation of this issue.

Please contact \_\_\_\_\_ if \_\_\_\_\_ can be of assistance to your office. I would be pleased to provide a briefing to your staff about the value and challenges of urban forests in (city/region).

Sincerely,

Signature

## Talking Points for Local Members' Meetings with Lawmakers

In talking about this program with lawmakers and their staff, we suggest the following points, said in your own words. Key messages to **repeat / reiterate** are in **RED**.

### **1) I'm here to talk about Urban Forests and the US Forest Service FY 2008 Budget.**

The Forest Service supports the health and livability of cities in two ways. First, is the Urban and Community Forestry Program, which is a cooperative program delivered through all state agencies – it is part of the State and Private Forestry budget. Second, is the Forest Service's investment in urban forest research, which is funded through the Forest Service Research and Development budget. Urban forest research is scattered among several research units in Syracuse, NY; Davis, CA; Chicago, IL; and several other locations – these units serve the interest of cities nationwide and are not just regional in their research focus.

### **2) The U&CF Program should be funded at \$50 million. That's why I support the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition's position** (hand them SUFC FY'2008 document).

#### **Why \$50 million?**

The proposed \$50 million is tiered in three parts, and recognizes the immediate challenge of maintaining delivery capacity of state agencies.

**A. U&CF needs \$36 million to support the nationwide delivery of the program via state agencies.** This is important for serving all sizes and types of communities, from big cities to suburbs and smaller towns. The program was funded at \$36 million in 2003, but is slated for a big budget cut in the President's FY 2008 budget, which would provide only \$17.4 million. (The National Association of State Foresters and National Association of Conservation Districts are both urging restoration of the \$36 million U&CF budget to support state programs.)

**B. In addition, we propose \$12 million in targeted funds to focus on metropolitan area Tree Canopy Initiatives to solve environmental challenges.** Already, several cities (Baltimore and Los Angeles, for example) have set tree canopy goals to help solve water quality issues, air quality problems, and other issues that impact human health. Sacramento's utility district is planting trees to reduce energy demand. These landscape scale approaches are a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate best practices, apply and test USFS urban forest research, and transfer management models for replication by other cities within the region. Focus funding of \$12 million could support 10-15 metropolitan initiatives that bring together R&D expertise with S&PF technical and financial assistance, in partnership with state and local partners.

**C. An additional \$2 million for technology transfer and education** would help research stations better communicate to practitioners and would help support greater coordination among Forest Service regions and state agencies in production and delivery of technical assistance

materials.

**3) Urban forest research should be funded at \$6 million.** Research has delivered tremendous gains w/ minimal funding. Enhancing the agency's R&D investment in Urban Forest research **from its current \$3.5 million to \$6 million** will allow existing stations to serve more states and regions, and provide enhanced research capacity for the fast-growing West and South, where urban research investments are now small. Modest research investments have yielded powerful tools and analysis products that help localities better manage their urban forests.

We remain concerned that effective and productive units, such as the Pacific SW Research Station at Davis, California, now have the same number of principal investigators as in 1994. During this same period, urban natural resources management at the local level has grown in importance. It does not appear that the Forest Service has enough young scientists “in the pipeline” to address future research needs in urban forest management.

**4) All Forest Service programs are being hurt by the cost of fire fighting.** Our nation’s forestlands deserve adequate support and protection. The current system of budgeting and paying for fire suppression is hurting the capacity of the agency to conduct research, deliver landowner assistance, or support better forest management. The Forest Service is, in practice, becoming a fire department. There must be a better way to budget and pay for fire suppression so that long term forest management is not put at risk.

**General Tips for Talking to Congressional Staff:**

- Assume that you are talking to a smart person who knows nothing about the topic.
- Connect the local to the national. Give an example of how the federal program has benefited your district or state. (grants, technology, training, etc)
- Keep it simple. Repeat your message. Leave them with a clear request for action.
- Offer yourself as a resource and seek to build a long-term relationship.
- Follow up in writing and bullet your requested action. Keep it simple.