



SUFC 2018 Farm Bill Recommendations

Who is the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition?

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUFC) is comprised of more than 30 national organizations and corporations representing hundreds of thousands of professionals and millions of supporters who care and support sustainable trees, forests and green infrastructure in communities where people live.

Why is the SUFC engaging in the Farm Bill?

We believe the USDA Forest Service—with its unparalleled research capacity and its strong network of public and private partnerships—is uniquely positioned to promote efficient Federal investment in creating and maintaining healthy urban forests and green infrastructure.

The USDA Forest Service oversees the Federal government's primary programs supporting the development and maintenance of urban forests and green infrastructure in communities across the nation, in cooperation with state and local governments. The legislative authorities for these programs are contained in Section 9—Urban and Community Forestry Assistance—of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act. These authorities were passed by Congress as part of the 1990 Farm Bill and have been amended in more recent Farm Bills. The SUFC is engaging in the creation of the 2018 Farm Bill to ensure that these essential authorities for Urban and Community Forestry Assistance are maintained and to offer a few additional opportunities for how Congress might strengthen Federal support for urban forests and green infrastructure that are critical to our nation's quality of life.

The Farm Bill is also a mechanism for ensuring that U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies have sufficient resources to counter threats to urban, rural, and wildland forests from invasive insects and diseases.

In addition, a critical overarching issue that Congress must address in order to deal effectively with USDA Forest Service authorities is wildfire budgeting. A **Wildfire Funding Fix** is needed to ensure the USDA Forest Service can fulfill its mission across program areas. A comprehensive fire funding fix should (1) address the continued erosion of agency budgets that results from the increasing 10-year average, and stabilize the level of funding for suppression within the agencies; (2) access disaster funding for extraordinarily costly fires; and (3) significantly reduce the need to strip funds from non-suppression accounts and programs that further reduces the ability to manage forests. If no fix has passed before consideration of the 2018 Farm Bill, then it needs to be included.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Better stewardship of urban forests and green infrastructure can achieve vital national goals: job creation, energy independence, vibrant local economies, clean water and healthy watersheds, improved air quality, and increased physical and mental public health benefits.

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition urges Congress to:

- 1. Maintain existing authorities relating to the USDA Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program AND support USDA Forest Service research with a high priority on developing best management practices for urban forestry.**

The Forest Service estimates that, today, our nation has 138 million acres of urban and community forests. These urban forests provide direct benefits to more than 80% of the U.S. population and help establish and maintain healthy, livable communities in diverse regional contexts. Urban trees and forests have helped communities to alleviate air pollution, reduce energy consumption, mitigate the heat island effect, improve human health, and manage stormwater runoff—effectively reducing costs by millions of dollars. The collective value of community trees and forests today is estimated at more than \$10 billion nationwide. With the U.S. population projected to be 90% urban by 2050, we need to invest in urban trees and forests now to create livable communities for the future.

Congress should maintain the existing authorities for the Forest Service’s Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) program, provided through Section 9 of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act. In FY 2016 alone, the U&CF program served more than 7,800 communities of all sizes across the U.S. through the development and maintenance of local urban forestry programs—76% of these cities and towns have fewer than 5,000 residents.

U&CF is a high-impact program and a smart investment as federal support is often leveraged 2:1 (or in many cases significantly more) by states and partner organizations. Working in partnership with State forestry agencies and other partners, the U&CF program invests in science-based management of communities’ forest resources in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, US Territories and affiliated Pacific Island Nations. Outcomes from the U&CF program include clean air, clean water, safer neighborhoods, increased property values, energy conservation and more. Best management practices provide technology, tools and information on tree canopy and urban forest health vital to federal and local partners, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

Congress should continue to provide strong support for USDA Forest Service research efforts that focus on developing best management practices for urban forestry, including technical tools and information to assist local partners, including state and local agencies, private companies, nonprofit organizations, and private citizens. Tools can help local policymakers establish priorities, direct resources, and help assure more efficient use of all Federal funds—whether from USDA or other Federal agencies.

- 2. Ensure existing authorities within Urban and Community Forestry Assistance apply to technical and financial assistance for:**
 - a. Analysis and planning services to local governments, in coordination with State forestry agencies to target areas identified in State Forest Action Plans as “at risk of conversion to other land uses” and to promote better use of existing forest resource data in land use planning.
 - b. Emergency responses to natural disasters and catastrophic events.
 - c. Innovative strategies and activities to promote urban wood utilization and markets.
- 3. Codify the Landscape Scale Restoration program, highlighting the importance of state Forest Action Plans and focusing funding on the highest national priorities in those plans.**

The LSR program strategically prioritizes resources by competitively allocating Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act funds. It focuses on targeting federal investments—leveraged by state and local resources—to areas of greatest need, highest value, or strongest innovation potential, as stipulated in each State Forest Action Plan. Urban and community forestry projects have been supported by LSR in the past, and we hope that LSR will continue to be a tool to support State forestry goals and complement the Urban & Community Forestry program.

4. **Continue and improve efforts to monitor urban forest health, and to prevent threats from invasive insects and disease that can spread beyond urban boundaries.** Pests and other invasive species are often first detected in urban areas. Early detection in urban settings can prevent huge expenditures for later eradication.
- a. Maintain continued funding (\$75 million per year) as authorized for the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program (Section 10007 of the 2014 Farm Bill).
 - b. Increase access to funding for APHIS's emergency response to invasive forest pests before they have a direct impact on trees in North America by amending the Plant Protection Act to clarify the Secretary's authority to use up to \$50 million over five years from existing sources of funds (Commodity Credit Corporation) to deal with invasive species emergencies, including when the immediate threat to agriculture is "indirect" – i.e., urban trees.
 - c. Establish a process to promote development and wide adoption of best practices by importers to reduce further the risk that tree-killing pests will be transported in crates, pallets, and other forms of packaging accompanying imported into the United States. One mechanism would be the creation of an industry certification program that incentivizes importers to adopt measures that go beyond requirements contained in ISPM#15 and APHIS' implementing regulations.
 - d. Prioritize long-term funding for research to restore tree species severely damaged by non-native pests utilizing competitive grants managed by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

Endorsed by:

Alliance for Community Trees

National Association of Conservation Districts

American Forests

National Association of State Foresters

American Planning Association

National Recreation and Parks Association

American Society of Consulting Arborists

Outdoor Power Equipment Institute

American Society of Landscape Architects

Society of American Foresters

Arbor Day Foundation

Society of Municipal Arborists

Bartlett Tree Experts Foundation

Tree Care Industry Association

Center for Invasive Species Prevention

Water Environment Federation

Davey Foundation

Wildlife Habitat Council

Green Infrastructure Center

International Society of Arboriculture

National Association of Landscape Professionals