



March 11, 2008

MAIL MERGE

Dear MAIL MERGE:

This letter is to state our collective opposition to the Forest Service's proposed FY 2009 budget for the USDA's *Urban and Community Forestry* program. The President has proposed a cut of 82% to this program from last year's levels. The Sustainable Urban Forestry Coalition and additional XXX organizations listed in this letter, strongly object to the President's proposed cuts to this program, and we urge you to request a budget of \$50 million in FY 2009 for the Urban and Community Forestry program.

Urban forests are vital to the health of cities and affect the quality of life for all residents through their positive impacts on air and water quality, energy conservation, returns on real estate and businesses, multiple green infrastructure issues, and, finally, their undeniable aesthetic value to all communities. The Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) program at the U.S. Forest Service is a critical partner in promoting these healthy forests in our communities. This program assists cities, suburbs, and towns to expand tree canopies while improving the condition of community trees and urban forest management in general.

The U&CF program delivers technical, financial, educational, and research assistance to communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and eight U.S. territories, and this assistance is delivered primarily through State forestry agencies. Urban and community forests make a significant contribution to the quality of life in communities across the country, and the Forest Service brings an impressive array of tools, resources, and expertise to this nation's efforts to promote urban and community forests.

In FY 2007, the Urban and Community Forestry program assisted 6,326 communities serving a population of more than 162.3 million. This program has pioneered research on the effects of urban trees on air quality and quantified the effects of trees on temperature reduction, removal of air pollutants, and reduced energy consumption. US Forest Service research has quantified the value trees provide through energy savings from direct shading, evapotranspiration, and wind breaks, resulting in lower utility bills and reduced peak energy demand.

The Urban and Community Forestry program has also provided valuable technical expertise to federal and state agencies to help support those agencies' objectives. Forest Service researchers have been working with air quality experts at the US EPA and with several state agencies to help fulfill air quality standards through the planting of urban trees to improve air quality. As a result, several states are including urban tree canopy retention and growth as a voluntary compliance measure in their State Implementation Plans. The Urban and Community Forestry program also provided assistance to the Department of Housing and Urban Development in revising its HOPE VI program to encourage the provision of green space and street trees in the design of low and mixed income housing.

Finally, the U&CF program is making a significant contribution to this nation's efforts to reduce greenhouse gases by conducting research and providing technical assistance regarding the role that urban trees play in both reducing green house gas emissions and in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

For further information or questions, please contact Alice Walker Ewen, Alliance for Community Trees at 301-277-0040.

Sincerely yours,

Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition

(Only SUFC members who have expressly requested to be included will be listed in the final distributed version of this letter.)