

(Designed for SUFC Groups to fill in with their organization name and contact information)

TEMPLATE

March XX, 2008

LETTER FOR SUFC MEMBERS TO USE TO CONTACT YOUR RESPECTIVE MEMBERS

Dear _____

As part of our work to represent the interests of our members at the national level, the _____ urges you to take action **in support of the Urban and Community Forestry budget for FY 09.**

The Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry program provides technical and financial assistance nationwide, delivered via State Forestry Agencies. So, **if you've ever received a cost-share grant from your State, or received technical assistance from your state urban forest coordinator**, then you have benefited from the federal Urban and Community Forestry program (U&CF).

Effective congressional outreach involves as many people and organizations as possible. That's why _____ is a member of the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition, a group of national associations and organizations with an interest in urban forestry. We're pleased that diverse groups like the US Conference of Mayors, Arbor Day Foundation, American Planning Association, and International Society of Arboriculture agree that urban forests are important.

The federal Urban and Community Forestry Program is at stake. The President's proposed budget for 2009 is only \$5 million -- an absurd figure that signals the virtual elimination of the U&CF Program. Funding has been steadily cut in recent years -- since a program high of \$36 million in 2003. However, this year's proposed budget, if enacted, would mean an **82% cut** from the previous year.

The President's proposed 82% budget cut to the federal U&CF program could mean the end of a long-standing federal-state partnership with 46 state forestry agencies. Local communities would no longer receive technical and financial assistance to create urban forest management plans, conduct tree inventories, engage residents in urban forest stewardship, and institute sound urban forest practices.

If we don't speak out, who will? Arborists, professional foresters, community tree advocates, tree and lawn care associations, urban planners, natural resources professionals and more know the tangible benefits that the Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program provides to our communities. Please make your voice heard!

HOW TO TAKE ACTION:

- 1) **Write** your US Senators and Representatives.
- 2) **Meet** with or phone your elected officials.
- 3) **Support** _____'s position **in favor of \$50 million for the U&CF Program and \$8 million for urban forest research.**

Talking points are attached for your discussions with lawmakers. If you have questions, please contact _____. After you meet with elected officials, please let _____ know so we can track progress.

Thanks for your help in pushing for greater awareness of the U&CF program in Congress this year.

Sincerely,

NAME

ORG

(see next page)

Talking Points for Local Members' Meetings with Lawmakers

In talking about this program with lawmakers, we suggest the following points (in your own words):

1) Stop any further cuts to the Urban and Community Forestry program.

2) The U&CF Program should be funded at \$50 million. Why I support the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition's position (pass along the *SUFC FY2009 Funding Recommendation* document).

Why \$50 million?

A. To adequately support the nationwide delivery of the program via state agencies. This is important for serving all sizes and types of communities, from cities to villages. The program was funded at \$36 million in 2003, but is slated for a big budget cut in the President's FY 2009 budget, which would provide only \$5 million.

B. In addition to providing \$36 million for state cooperative programs, we see a need for \$14 million in targeted increases to focus on metropolitan area Tree Canopy Initiatives, as well as to enhance technology transfer and education. Already, several cities (Baltimore, for example) have set aggressive tree canopy goals to help solve water quality issues, air quality problems, and other issues that impact human health.

3) Research has delivered tremendous gains w/ minimal funding. Enhancing the agency's investment in UF research **from its current \$6.2 million to \$8 million** will allow existing stations to serve more states and regions, and provide enhanced research capacity for units that conduct urban forest research. Modest research investments have yielded powerful tools and analysis products that help localities better manage their urban forests.

4) The Forest Service remains under tremendous budget pressure caused by fire fighting. We hope the federal government can find new ways to address the need to protect our nation's wildlands without hurting urban forest management programs.

General Tips:

- Assume that you are talking to a smart person but knows little to 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 behind a clear request for action.
- Offer yourself as a resource and seek to build a long-term relationship.