

Amendment – To eliminate the Urban and Community Forestry (U & CF)

According to the Forest Service, the Urban and Community Forestry program “assists cities, suburbs, and towns across the country in improving the condition and coverage of community trees and forests... the U & CF program promotes the creation of healthier, more livable urban environments across the Nation by focusing on connecting people from they live to community parks and green spaces.”

The program received **\$31.3 million** in FY 2012 and is authorized at **\$50 million** in the new Senate Farm Bill committee draft.

Recent program highlights have included major funding for the New York RELEAF conference “to create partnerships among tree professionals, citizen activists and volunteers, educators, government, and the private sector, ” a grant to develop a study manual “to educate and influence homeowners associations (HOAs) to become better stewards of trees and natural resources on their properties,” a joint effort with a non-profit group to initiate the Vibrant Cities and Urban Forests “National Call to Action” with a “focus... to change the way we live in, study, manage and rebuild our towns and cities in the next decade and beyond,” and sponsorship of a light pole banner design contest among local artists in Washington, D.C. The latter yielded 100 banners that were placed around the Capital City and were intended “to depict visual statements about urban forestry.”

The program has outlived it purposes and is duplicated by other federal programs, and more prominently, by well established private, non-profit, and community led efforts.

In addition, the Forest Service has more urgent funding priorities. As one of the nation’s largest landholders, the Forest Service is responsible for stewardship of more than 190 million acres of federally owned land. It manages 155 national forests, 20 national grasslands, 600 Ranger districts, and has an estimated 30,000 employees. Today, the agency faces a crippling \$5.1 billion maintenance backlog and received just \$9.1 million in FY 2012 to address these most urgent needs.

Duplicative of USDA Programs

Many other federal programs offer assistance with building urban and managing urban forests and the development of green spaces, including several within the Forest Service and the Department of Agriculture. For instance:

- The FS' Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and Community Forest and Open Spaces Conservation Program (CFP) are both available to urban areas to acquire lands for forest protection and development and to prevent subdivision and development of existing urban forests. The two programs received a combined \$54 million in FY 2012.
- The FS' Forest Health Management Program surveys and monitors urban forest health and can provide critical information to community planners.
- The FS's Research and Development offices can and does provide forest health and management tools to local urban health experts.
- The USDA National Agroforestry Center assists communities that "see that trees can be put to work to meet their environmental, social, and economic goals." NAC has published "Working Trees for Communities" to assist communities in adapting proven agroforestry technologies.
- The FS' Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) provides resources to landowners to maintain and manage their private forests.
- The FS (Pacific Northwest Region) administers the Urban Ecosystems and Social Dynamics Program which "provides [its] customers **with reliable scientific** evidence that the benefits of urban forests add real value to communities." This unit has formed partnerships with communities, including the Sacramento Urban Forest for Clean Air Project.

Duplicative of Other Federal Programs

Other federal agencies provide funding and informational resources for the same purposes. This includes, but is not limited to: The Department of the Interior (America's Great Outdoors), Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Bureau of Land

Management, and National Park Service. In addition, funds were made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Vibrant and Widespread State, Community and Non-Profit Initiatives

Most states and communities across the nation have well established urban and community forestry programs (public and non-profit). In addition, multiple professional organizations offer resources and information tailored to urban and community forestry. This includes the Society of American Foresters, the American Planning Association, the International Society for Arboriculture, and the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Finally, multiple national and regional foundations, endowments, and educational institutions have programs devoted to promoting urban and community forestry. This includes the Arbor Day Foundation, with more than a million members, the Casey Tree Foundation (for the Capital region), and MilliontreesNYC . In Oklahoma, this includes the Tree Bank Foundation, which has planted more than 186,000 trees in central Oklahoma and Up With Trees! which has been growing Tulsa's urban forest for over thirty years.

Already in the Interests of all Communities

As the Forest Service notes: "Our research confirms that trees in our community forests are assets that pay us back." With hundreds of organizations around the nation devoted to this self evident truth, it is time for the agency to focus on managing the more than 200 million acres under its management and the maintenance backlog that threatens access to those national treasures.