



September 29, 2011

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate
Committee on Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Pat Roberts
United States Senate
Committee on Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Roberts:

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUFC) represents city mayors, community nonprofits, national associations, nursery and landscape professionals, urban planners, city managers, public works professionals, arborists, utility professionals, foresters, scientists, and others nationwide. Working together since 2004, these diverse professionals monitor, care and advocate for urban trees and green infrastructure. We are pleased to offer recommendations for the 2012 Farm Bill designed to deliver economic, environmental, social, and health benefits through urban trees and green infrastructure.

We recognize that addressing the nation's fiscal crisis will make it incredibly difficult to write the next Farm Bill. We offer the following key priorities that help maintain healthy urban and community forests *without additional net federal spending* and—in many cases—may save money by enhanced program coordination:

- **Encourage and facilitate interagency coordination in agency efforts on green infrastructure initiatives and support efforts to protect urban forest health.** SUFC urges Congress to consider actions that improve coordination among USDA programs and other Federal agencies charged with delivering urban forestry and green infrastructure programs at the national, state and local levels.
- **Address issues at the landscape level and promote urban trees and forests as green infrastructure.** The SUFC supports the establishment of formal mechanisms for coordination among urban and rural programs and projects that restore, maintain and protect watershed health.
- **Provide research, tools and information designed to serve “customer” needs.** Congress should ensure that the USDA Forest Service places a high priority on urban forest research that develops best management practices as well as technical tools and information to assist local partners, including state and local agencies, private companies, non-profit organizations, and private citizens.

Urban forests are vital to creating and maintaining healthy, livable communities of all sizes. Trees in urban areas are a key component of sustainable green infrastructure and provide quantifiable ecosystem benefits to the 80% of Americans who live in urban areas. Urban forests enhance air and

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water quality, reduce energy use, enhance property values, and provide an array of health and wellness benefits to people. Creating and maintaining a healthy tree canopy also creates a substantial demand for jobs. For instance, green industries have an estimated economic impact of \$147.8 billion and can provide tens of thousands of new jobs—such as arborists, urban foresters, and landscape designers—in development and maintenance.¹

The 2012 Farm Bill can capitalize on the vast technical knowledge and experience of the USDA, particularly the USDA Forest Service, which has built strong public/private partnerships with State Forestry agencies, non-profit conservation organizations, and private companies that establish, protect and care for urban forests. Due to the agency's technical expertise and its capacity through partnerships, the SUFC believes that the USDA Forest Service should play a leading role, in coordination with other federal agencies, to establish, protect, and maintain urban forests and green infrastructure.

We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss how the above priorities will help deliver Federal resources in a way that promotes green infrastructure in a cost-effective manner and helps address environmental, health and community priorities. Should you need any further information, please contact Gerry Gray, American Forests at 202-737-1944 or ggray@amfor.org.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you as you develop the next Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Community Trees
America in Bloom
American Forests
American Public Works Association
American Rivers
American Society of Consulting Arborists
American Society of Landscape Architects
City Parks Alliance
Davey Tree Expert Company
International Society of Arboriculture
Keep America Beautiful
National Association of State Foresters
Professional Landcare Network
Society of Municipal Arborists
Tree Care Industry Association
Utility Arborist Association

Cc: Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture

¹ Hall, C.R., A.W. Hodges, and J.J. Haydu: 2005