

SUFC Farm Bill Talking Points

1. The SUFC's Farm Bill agenda calls for no new programs or increased funding levels.

The SUFC urges Congress to maintain existing authorities relating to the USDA Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program. The value of this federal program, in partnership with state and local agencies, non-profit groups and businesses, has been clearly demonstrated.

- More than 7,000 communities benefited from this program in 2011 alone.
- Outcomes for citizens include clean air, clean water, safer neighborhoods, increased property values, energy conservation and others.

The SUFC also urges Congress to recognize and support USDA Forest Service research that places a high priority on developing best management practices for urban forestry as well as technical tools and information to assist Federal and local partners, state agencies, and non-profit organizations.

2. SUFC believes that coordinating the Urban and Community Forestry Programs with other Farm Bill-authorized programs can increase benefits to both urban and rural areas.

No ecological boundaries separate urban, community and rural forests. Pests, disease and invasives spread easily from city to suburb to rural forests. Likewise, rural and urban forests play vital, inseparable roles delivering clean water to communities; they provide fiscally sound solutions to stormwater management, water quality and supply, pollutant reduction and wildlife habitat.

Congress should direct USDA to increase efficiency, improve outcomes and maximize the value of Federal investments by:

- Jointly planning and delivering related programs administered by different agencies. Programs like EQIP [NRCS] which deal with upstream water quality should be implemented in concert with programs like the U&CF Program [Forest Service], which deals with downstream urban water quality programs.
- Allowing different agencies to use funding from conservation and forestry programs to support projects that cross rural and urban boundaries, and are prioritized in rigorous, large-scale plans – including state forest action plans, state wildlife action plans, state watershed and water quality plans, invasive pest plans, and metropolitan-level or regional plans.

3. Congress should continue and improve efforts to monitor urban forest health, and to prevent threats from invasive insects and disease that can spread beyond urban boundaries. Early detection in urban settings can prevent huge expenditures for later eradication.

- Maintain funding (\$50 million/year) as authorized for the Early Plant Pest Detection and Surveillance Improvement Program (Section 10201, 2008 Farm Bill).