

## SUFC Policy Working Group

6/26/2014

In attendance: Becky, Sofia, Brenna, Brent, Alex, Cara, Nick, Gerry, Danielle, Leighton, Faith, Larry, Jen

### **1. Appropriations update – what’s the status of the Interior bill?**

Energy and Water bill was pulled from senate floor, foreshadowing for trouble with interior bill due to policy riders regarding carbon regulations and waters of the U.S. Because EPA is under the Interior appropriations bill, it is expected that these riders will appear there as well.

Brent met with Rachel Taylor, Interior subcommittee clerk, she was not optimistic the bill passing. A continuing resolution is expected.

### **2. WDFR update – wildfire disaster funding act**

The fire suppression funding coalition held a Hill day, in attendance were foresters, conservation groups, sportsmen groups, and others. The purpose was to educate members on WDFR and garner for support. Current cosponsors: 94 on house side, 13 on senate.

The major concerns we heard were about spending. Although CBO report scored the legislation at zero, the speculation of future expansion of the disaster relief cap has given members some pause.

A bill from Senator McCain and Senator Barasso is expected in the coming weeks. While this bill would still use the disaster relief cap to cover the costs that exceed the 10-year average, the USFS and DOI would still be covering 100% of that average, rather than the 70% that is in the WDFR bill. McCain and Barasso’s concern with the current bill is the assurance that freed-up funds would go to forest management activities to reduce the threat of extreme wildfires.

The coalition is keeping an eye on the bill, as NEPA efficiencies are expected to surface.

### **3. Fly-in updates: Rep. Valadao (R-CA) and Rep. Sarbanes (D-MD)**

A call has been scheduled with Chuck from California ReLeaf, Nancy Hughes from California Urban Forest Council, and Gordon Mann to outline a strategy and present it to the group.

Rep. Sarbanes is interested in green infrastructure, youth engagement, and hurricane resiliency – all of which make the congressman a likely supporter of urban forestry. One

point of contact may be the former MD state forester and new director of cooperative forestry at the USFS, Steve Koehn.

Action Item: Becky will schedule a Sarbanes meeting to gauge interest. There may be a possibility of an urban forest tour for staffers in their district.

#### **4. Green Infrastructure Expo on the Hill**

A group of organizations interested in green infrastructure held a meeting Tuesday June 24 with the EPA at ASLA to discuss a Green Infrastructure Expo on the Hill.

Representative Edwards has an interest in being a sponsor, will also reach out to Senator Udall. We are aiming for a September date and are still in the beginning stages of planning. Booths will include demonstrations, pairing up companies that are working in different municipalities, to give Hill staff and members the opportunity to touch and see green infrastructure.

Action Item: if anyone has interest in joining contact Mark Cason [mcason@asla.org](mailto:mcason@asla.org) or Leighton Yates [lyates@asla.org](mailto:lyates@asla.org) at ASLA.

#### **5. Briefing on CA urban forests and carbon market**

The state legislature passed the budget for FY15 that includes auction provisions from the cap and trade bill, in this one year there is a total of 17.8 million that will go to CalFire to support urban forestry projects. The projects have to meet some emission reduction goals but won't be as strict as some urban forest protocols in their emerging carbon markets. This is the largest single investment for urban forestry by any state in the U.S. 40% of cap and trade revenue will run through CalFire and could be allocated to urban forestry in the future, as well.

CAR released their revised urban forestry protocols on June 25. It differs significantly from the first protocols, several key concerns had been addressed as it now allows consideration for tree canopy cover in the project and planning stages. It is much more of a workable structure, though the number of credits accumulated for the cost may be too small to justify registering and monitoring.

#### **6. Other:**

A request has been sent for a meeting with Deputy Secretary Harden. Purpose of the meeting is to reintroduce her to SUFC, as well as addressing forest health issues. Possible dates will be in late July, early August or early September, based on her schedule. We would like a diverse group to attend the meeting, representing the interests of SUFC. Once scheduled, there will be a call to assign what our asks are and talking points to ensure substantive meeting.

Congratulations to Faith Campbell, who is retiring from TNC. However, she will still be involved in forest pest issues through her new organization she is co-founding.

A group of urban forest experts met with FEMA to discuss how their policies and regulations could be more “tree friendly.” Larry Wiseman and Jen will keep us informed on this issue.