

**SUFC Policy Working Group Conference Call**  
**Thursday 9/11/14 at 2 pm Eastern**

**Participants: Faith, Becky, Jen, Nick, Gerry, Brent, Peter, Cara, Rebecca, Chuck, Danielle, Brenna**

**FUTURE MEETING DATE DECISION: 2 P.M. Thursdays (continued to be called on an as-needed basis, ranging from weekly to monthly)**

1. **Summer meeting update**

a. Barbara Johnson, OMB

July meeting (Becky, Faith & Carrie) was an “excellent meeting” because she was enthusiastic about the information SUFC members had for her although she was not particularly knowledgeable in the area. She shared that she had been hearing (in the OMB family) that b/c the FS has such prominent fire and pest/invasive issues in the National Forests, some question the purpose of State & Private Forestry Program. She asked if we had met with the FS Budget Office – and that is SUFC’s next step.

**ACTION ITEM:** Becky to follow up with FS Budget office to set meeting at appropriate date.

b. Robert Bonnie, USDA

Gerry, Brent, Peter & Jen attend the meeting (joined by Meryl Harrell – Chief of Staff) last week. The purpose was to introduce SUFC formally and to further tie the role of UF with his focus on climate change.

Forest Climate Working Group ...how does UF play a role with some of the work that the subgroups are working on re: climate change (DOI, CEQ, FS+). Robert was very open to our message, interested and positive about UCF Program/projects at FS. Importance of social benefits were also flagged by Meryl. We were also able to showcase how NACD constituency has a growing interest in UF and why USDA as a whole, with a primarily rural focus, should be interested in UF.

As Peter summarized, having Meryl at this meeting was key as she is the link between Butch and Bonnie and will be the one actually doing the “work”. We need to keep her well informed and close to SUFC as much as possible. Also, having met with both Butch and Robert – this will hopefully reinforce their support of urban issues – and U&CF.

c. Other

Gerry, Scott (Maco R & D Chair) & Jen met with Lisa Pelstring (Urban Advisor) at Dept. of Interior and Under Sec. Butch Blazer on Tuesday of this week. Both meetings were productive although the focus was more on urban R & D. Jen may have semi-regular meetings with Lisa going forward to keep mutually informed and engaged on UF and GI issues across the Bureau's. Butch requested some basic UF talking points from SUFC for his upcoming presentation at NASF Conf. later this month. Butch also expressed interest in learning and speaking at the ACES (A Community on Ecosystem Services) Conf. in DC Dec.8-12.

## 2. Fly-out options

### d. Update on Rep. Valadao and CA fly-outs

Per several subgroup conversations and brainstorming with SUFC members and CA leaders, we have decided to hold off pursuing a fly out/district meeting/tour until after the mid-term elections. (It does appear Valadao is comfortably in the lead for re-election). We have to think very carefully about messaging b/c of unique situation of CA's \$17 m state funding for urban forestry. We will think carefully on how we talk about the need for federal dollars across the country.

Note: Don Winsett and Jen will meet with Valadao Leg. Director (Chris Marklund) next week to continue to keep the relationship alive and introduce idea of a district site visit.

### e. MD options with Rep. Sarbanes

Don and Jen will meet with Sarbanes staffer next week. Lay potential groundwork for Baltimore region site visit (or DC?) lead by ACTrees/members. Jen will report out.

## 3. Appropriations update

### f. CR expected through mid-term elections

The vote of the CR is likely to happen next week and is expected to cover through December. We decided not to pursue any additional House visits for now due to elections and limited cr/budget focus. Focus for the Fall will be on fly-out planning, federal meetings and budget appropriation conversation (FS). We should keep Senate champion cultivation on the to do list as well (of those not up for election.) SUFC will stay alert to see if there is another need/opportunity to conduct outreach re: UCF budget. Faith shared that there is language in the House Interior Appropriations Bill that caps pests and invasive species administrative expenses – could significantly hamper the program/effectiveness.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Faith will let SUFC know if there is an opportunity to talk to Utah Rep. Bishop who is looking to restructure federal program. Gerry will talk to ACTRees about role/rep. in Utah.

4. Next round of Hill visits

- g. Jim Skiera and Don Winsett in town – who should they meet with?

- On the horizon is a meeting with new S& P Director – who will also attend Partners Conf. in Charlotte.
- For any high-level meeting, we need key talking points and key asks (even if just advice/guidance on an issue).
- Re: interest in talking to the FS Chief (Tidwell), we may want to address the broad mission of the USDA FS and inclusion of UF - and have the Chief talk about the mandate to protect forests across the country (from non-native pests to social benefits of UF) and what can SUFC and member organizations do to help reinforce that message.