

**SUFC Policy Working Group  
CNRP Agenda & Urban Forests  
Call with Alice Ewen  
Office of Land & Water Ecosystems, Council on Environmental Quality  
Thursday, October 23, 2014 2:30-3:00 PM  
Phone: 1-877-366-0711 Code: 73095206**

Present: Rebecca Arvin, John Barnwell, Cara Boucher, Mark Cason, Alice Ewen, Gerry Gray, Jen Hinrichs, Gordon Mann, Chuck Mills, Meghan Mitchum, Nick Tobenkin, Rebecca Turner, Danielle Watson

Alice Ewen, Deputy Associate Director of Lands at the White House Council on Environmental Quality, gave an overview of the Administration's [\*Priority Agenda for Enhancing the Climate Resilience of America's Natural Resources\*](#), how urban forests and green infrastructure play an important role, and ways SUFC can remain engaged moving forward.

**Summary of President's Climate Strategy:**

- In the 2013 State of the Union, the President talked about wanting to use his “pen, phone, megaphone” to do something about climate change. In June of 2013, the Administration released the President's Climate Action Plan in which there were several parts that specifically talked about the important role of forests – urban forests were incorporated within the general forest references.
- The November 2013 Executive Order “Preparing the US for the Impacts of Climate Change,” [EO 13653](#), laid out a host of actions for CEQ and the land management agencies – Section 3 focuses on managing land and water for climate preparedness and resilience.

**The Agenda:**

- The Agenda, stemming from Section 3 of EO 13653, identifies four priority strategies to make the Nation's natural resources more resilient to a changing climate. It lays out specific deliverables with deadlines that SUFC can use to hold agencies accountable.
  - Foster climate-resilient lands and waters
  - Manage and enhance U.S. carbon sinks
  - Enhance community preparedness and resilience by utilizing and sustaining natural resources
  - Modernizing Federal programs, investments, and delivery of services to build resilience and enhance sequestration of biological carbon
- The CEQ [blogpost](#) has a great synopsis of the agenda.
- The State and Tribal Local Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience provided recommendations on how to enhance the President's climate resilience agenda. The Task Force made urban forest recommendations which helped emphasize the

important role of UF and green infrastructure. Task Force member, Mayor of Des Moines, Frank Cownie, was key in that regard and SUFC should continue to work with such champions.

- A climate resilience toolkit, consisting of the many existing resources across agencies, will be compiled to make it more accessible and easier for state and local agencies to use.
- A key opportunity for urban forests is **carbon optimization**, a new aspect of the agenda. It recognizes the importance of private, national, agroforestry, and urban forestry. SUFC should consider how to advance carbon sequestration ecosystem services component in urban forests.
- Green Infrastructure plays a key role in enhancing community preparedness and resilience through natural resource infrastructure.
- Modernizing federal agencies and prioritizing where to begin the effort is another area where SUFC can play a role. All of these departments are committed and looking for low-hanging fruit and smaller programs that are easier to influence and then some large programs. SUFC knows how programs specific to urban forestry are delivered and can provide suggestions on how to streamline them.
- The WH press release on the Climate Plan is a good reference piece to use in our urban forestry work.
- SUFC members should hold “us” (federal gov’t, Congress, CEQ etc.) accountable to the Plan. Having them know we are tracking the Plan is important for them to know and is helpful to advancing the agenda overall.

#### **Rollout Strategy:**

- The Agenda was announced October 8, including a set of federal action, private sector partners (including many SUFC members) were included and made announcements in align with the agenda. The Administration’s Green Infrastructure Collaborative, with the focus on stormwater management, held a meeting the same day.

#### **HUD’s Community Block Grants**

- There are opportunities for green infrastructure projects in HUD’s Community Block Grants. \$1 billion in funding available. Funds are for communities that have suffered a natural disaster declared under the Stafford Act in 2011-2013.
- While it is not explicitly about green infrastructure, the concept of the program is to allow for rebuilding better for climate resilience, and in some instances, investment in natural infrastructure may be merited. Environmentally sustainable and innovative solutions are a part of the overall criteria for competitive projects. Applicants are going to be local units of government, generally.

[http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press\\_releases\\_media\\_advisories/2014/HUDNo\\_14-109](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2014/HUDNo_14-109)

<https://www.hudexchange.info/cdbg-dr/resilient-recovery/>

NOFA: <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=2014ndrc-nofa.pdf>

**Questions:**

**How does this agenda connect to Congressional action and the budget?**

- All actions proposed in the agenda are covered in the FY2015 appropriations request from the President. More ambitious actions that were proposed by the agencies are included in the conclusion as part of possible future actions.
- While this is an administration action, there are a number of congressional members very passionate about specific recommendations. There is current legislation around the wildfire budgeting issues, for example.

**When discussing landscape scale efforts, was urban forests considered as part of that effort?**

- Urban forests have not been considered part of the “landscape scale” discussion, rural natural resources are the main focus. However it is an important aspect to consider, especially when considering urban expansion and the fragmentation of existing natural resources.