

# SUFC Steering Committee Meeting

Washington, DC  
December 9, 2014

## Meeting Summary

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### Participants:

Gerry Gray & Carrie Gallagher (ACTrees)

Mark Garvin (TCIA)

Cara Boucher & Steve Sinclair & Lisa Allen  
(NASF)

Don Winsett (ISA/Davey)

Scott Maco & Brian Borkowicz (Davey)

Lauren Marshall (USDA FS)

Peter Hutchins & Rebecca Turner (American  
Forests)

Dan Lambe (ADF)

Jen Hinrichs (SUFC)

Kevin O'Hara (NRPA)

David Rouse (APA)

Paul Ries (SUFC Advisor)

## Meeting Snapshot:

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### Strategic Engagement & Communications Update

- ✓ Current SUFC communication efforts are paying off and receiving positive feedback (Notes from Chair and diverse UF article placements). Additional external professional support and funding is needed for 2015. Priority area for 2015 Forest Service grant.
- ✓ Strategic WG formalizing outreach efforts and continue to hone messaging and audiences.

### Policy Update

- ✓ Continued focus on FLY OUTs vs. FLY INs to maximize relationship and cultivating new UF champions across aisle. SUFC policy platform drafting in January 2015 - early and hard hit due to election year.
- ✓ All SUFC members should plan own Hill visits around Annual Meeting (25/27<sup>th</sup>). Tying in local stories (and using national media campaign like Faces of Urban Forestry and iTree reports) are key.

### Urban Research & Development

- ✓ R&D WG is facilitating discussion on Urban FIA; targeting key R&D leaders in FS and other federal agencies (and advisory groups) to expand UF research connections/message; focusing on cross-walking Appropriations issues with Policy WG in early 2015

### General Administration (Update/Annual Meeting, On-line processing, Budget+)

- ✓ High gear for Feb. Annual Reception & Meeting; likely suburban MD mtg. location. High attendance expected; diverse speaker/sessions plans underway. Rep. Joyce = US Botanic Garden sponsor.
- ✓ AF provided budget overview; contractual funds run low by spring; FS grant proposal a 1<sup>st</sup> qtr priority. AF and SUFC getting all payment and tracking processes uploaded on-line.

### Strategic Planning

Strong interest in outcomes; 10k budget SOW out in Jan.; strong consensus @ SUFC strengths and keeping planning in line: simplicity, consistency, flexibility, central coord., reliability+

## FULL NOTES:

### Strategic Engagement & Communications Update

- The Strategic Engagement and Outreach working group formalized the SUFC focus on maximizing current member engagement and enriching these relationships through a written policy statement. Please see attached.

**ACTION ITEM:** Review and send any comments to Dan/Carrie and Jen by 1/15/15 (ATTACHED)

- Pursuing the three sectors (energy, regional/centralized gov't bodies, and public health) identified by the Steering Committee and this working group - two articles were crafted and placed in [International City/County Management Association \(ICMA\)](#) and [American Public Health Association \(APHA\)](#) in December. Also placed this summer/fall were urban forestry-focused articles in WEF, APWA and NRPA publications (both print and electronic).
- *Notes from the Chair* continues to receive positive feedback both from SUFC members and others outside the immediate community. Recent comments include: "like the light, conversational style," "good length", "good way to stay connected," "good use of humor." The current mailing list is @ 800 via Constant Contact database (managed by Jen).
- Jen and Don stressed an on-going and **strong need for external communication support** to maintain current SUFC internal and external communications. A monthly retainer for Fifth Estate (or other small firm/individual) would provide a significant amount of maintenance communications (i.e., database mgmt., drafting *Note from the Chair*, editing support, using social media to extend reach of published articles and newsworthy items) **AND pro-active communications** such as article placement with a wide variety of SUFC supporters and those target audiences outside SUFC (public health, energy etc.)

**ACTION ITEM:** Include communications line item in upcoming SUFC grant to USDA FS.

- Current recap on communications support: ACTrees managing updates to Vibrant Cities site; ADF uploads *Notes from the Chair*; ISA manages and processes updates to SUFC site. Jen provides update/all content to pro-bono partners above, manages databases; and oversees all communication aspects.

### Policy Update

- Overall, "flipping the script" and focusing energies and resources on "fly out" vs. a "fly in" had positive results in 2014 (Joyce-R/Approps) and continues to be endorsed by SUFC policy leaders across the board. As an effort to continue cultivating UF Champions, CA (Valadao -R/Approps) and MD (Sarbanes-D) are in SUFC sights for early 2015. "The best way to move the ball forward it to build a relationship at home."
- SUFC and will begin looking at the Farm Bill again shortly - and do so in conjunction with the Farm Bill Coalition. SUFC also was able to make greater impact through Policy WG members' participation in Forest Climate Working Group re: UF issues.
- APHIS funding and other invasive issues are also being addressed going into 2015. Mark Garvin was recently invited by USDA APHIS PPQ, and National Policy Manager for the Emerald Ash Borer and Gypsy Moth Programs to participate in multi-group strategizing session (March 25).

- Climate change will continue as platform strategy item. The House and Senate changes will be tracked carefully: [new leadership with Bishop and Hastings](#) (see Policy WG notes for details). This is an opportunity to push a message about value of UF that runs across both party lines for UF/healthy communities.
- Comprehensive SUFC Policy platform building session is scheduled for January 28<sup>th</sup>. All welcome. Policy WG will meet at American Forests. Early and hard strike recommended as there will be a narrow window of activity before Presidential campaigning starts.
- TRY A PACKAGE DEAL: In Partnership: ADF's [Faces of Urban Forestry](#), urban forestry coordinator and iTree information is an excellent way to TELL A STORY and a novel approach for SUFC re: UF Champion recruitment efforts.

**ACTION ITEM:** Please plan to make Hill visits when you come to DC for SUFC Annual Meeting. Policy WG will help coordinate with individual SUFC members but not large-scale visits. *Reach out proactively to Becky/Gerry if not through your own staff.*

**ACTION ITEM:** Consider “package deal” by piecing together SUFC members’ communication/technical knowledge to help “tell our story.”

## Urban Research & Development

- R&D Working Group (WG) continues to focus on a handful of research priorities from the SUFC [platform](#).
- R&D WG looking to work closely with Policy WG in early January and may be tasked with developing tailored iTree reports for certain legislative districts for targeted elected officials. (Modeled on successful Rep. Joyce/Ohio efforts in 2014).
- WG is continuing to build relationships with FS R&D leadership (FSRET to Michael Rains) but is also aware of future transitions/pending retirements and looking to broaden stable of contacts.
- Urban FIA is an on-going conversation which takes a substantial amount of WG time. NASF is examining the issue deeply (Urban Cmte) and reporting back out to R&D WG as well as the FS. In short, “FIA is the nation’s inventory of trees and includes rural, urban and suburban. If you aren’t in IT, you don’t exist.”
- 10-Year UF Action Plan development is being promoted through WG discussion, feedback on survey, Jen’s participation on the advisory committee (for plan development) and SUFC members who are also serving on NUCFAC. NUCFAC and SUFC are also striving to communicate more closely through member overlap and assigned liaisons of Don Winsett & Walt Warriner.

## General Administration (*Update/Annual Meeting, On-line processing, Budget+*)

- At the upcoming SUFC Annual Meeting (Feb. 26), the Steering Committee will put forth a recommended slate for the SUFC Steering Committee/SUFC leadership. It will be voted on and be official per SUFC [governance guidelines](#). Kevin O’Hara (National Recreation & Parks Association) and David Rouse (American Planning Association) and any potential Chair candidates.
- SUFC is being priced out of DC hotels/locations for the Annual Meeting AND has outgrown the Courtyard Marriott (NOMA) in DC. Cmte directed Jen to look at MD and VA options.

- Steering Cmte supports an inclusive approach to Annual Meeting - until a tipping point is reached when the function/structure of the meeting is no longer effective with X audience size.

**ACTION ITEM:** Jen is researching/conducting site visits for new locations in both suburban MD and VA near metro lines. Any administrative or event planning expertise is welcome as this is a very time consuming task.

**ACTION ITEM:** Jen to reach out to Under Sec. Robert Bonnie for potential addressing SUFC membership.

**ACTION ITEM:** Carrie and Steve and Kevin (?) offered to look into field trip options for meeting attendees on Wed. Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> in D metro area.

**ACTION ITEM:** The SUFC Chair Succession committee (Don, Carrie, Dan, Jen) will reconvene in late December or early 2015 to advance proposals and present a recommendation to the full Steering Committee for review.

- SUFC website is in need of cosmetic and functionality overhaul. Jennifer hopes to address this in 2015 but expects cost to be nominal outside of time commitments.
- American Forests is brining ALL SUFC registration and payment processing on-line for early 2015. Jennifer, Becky and Peter are working on this currently. These improvements include:
  - Processing on-line contributions (private sector or individual donations to SUFC)
  - Processing membership payments
  - In-kind match and tracking for SUFC contributors
  - Meeting registration (i.e., Annual Meeting)

**ACTION ITEM:** Carrie requested a webinar to share information about on-line processing (lessons learned? - TBD)

#### Budget:

- Budget update provided by Peter Hutchins, American Forests (SUFC fiscal agent). **See attached statement of activities.** Current statements combine federal and non-federal funding but future accounting will allow for each funding stream to be tracked separately.
  - It was noted that Jennifer's travel requests and subsequent travel have increased in 2014 and Don requested additional travel on behalf of SUFC in 2015.
  - Convener hours are higher than estimated in the original FS grant. Current estimates predict grant funding (does not include non-federal dollars) will cover Convener contractual hours through April 2015. Non-federal funds could cover Convener contract for several months until new grant funding is available - if recommended by the Steering Committee.
  - Reasons for more rapid contractual dollar expenditure (for Convener) are due to increased travel/special event participation (ISA Annual Mtg/Leadership Training; NASF Conf.; multiple day-long DC meetings throughout the year) and a general increase in overall SUFC activities. This is a reflection of overall SUFC growth and interest in our work.
  - **NOTE:** SUFC leaders have significantly stepped up their in-kind contributions to SUFC, especially around working group leadership -freeing Jen/convener to focus on SUFC management, outreach/maintenance and other priorities. SUFC's success in the past two years would not have been possible without this increased ownership.

**ACTION ITEM:** The Steering Committee will need to focus on the Forest Service grant EARLY in 2015 in order to maximize funding opportunities. The grant proposal should consider an increase in travel funding and strategic communications funding at a minimum. Jennifer will draft an outline for the Cmte to review in January.

**ACTION ITEM:** Jennifer to draft updated job description and highlight convener priorities, percentage of time spent on X mgmt. tasks and opportunities to delegate tasks to contractual admin. support (significant cost savings for some administrative/support tasks).

- SUFC to consider long-term administrative support in 2015 - potentially through contract support or year-long fellowship options (graduate+ student candidates). Lauren Marshall offered to be resource for fellows candidates.

## Strategic Planning

Observations about proposed planning & how Steering Cmte describes a successful final plan (and the process):

- Why do we need a plan and what are we looking for?:
  - A clear, simple strategic plan will be an excellent fundraising tool for SUFC
  - Remind our members where are going
  - Reflect our core values we commonly hold
  - Lead our annual work plans (by working group)
  - It is a reflection of the natural maturation of SUFC
  - Create a filter: yes/no for weighing SUFC opportunities
  - Provide road map for sustaining and increasing diverse SUFC funding and ability to look at the next generation of funders
  - Enable SUFC to maximize its potential impact - better leverage collective strength
  - Specificity of goals
- A plan will also allow SUFC member liaisons to share a document with their leadership to reinforcement the organizational overlap with their mission - esp. helpful to members who have had limited involvement or changing leadership and help them “make the case for SUFC involvement”.
- The strategic plan should clearly reflect our organizational priorities and help keep SUFC focused; better evaluating new ideas and initiatives proposed to SUFC.
- SUFC Strengths:
  - Simple
  - Reliable
  - Consistent
  - Longevity
  - Specific yet flexible
  - Key is having central coordinator
- SUFC wants to (and the plan should facilitate):
  - Build a sense of community
  - Build a greater common voice on policy and help SUFC determine if we are sustaining OR growing the funding pot
  - Facilitate partnerships and projects
- “Our Coalition is about the MEMBERS and connecting the dots -not about the entity of the SUFC itself. How are we building on the cause through SUFC as the vehicle?”
- There was no final consensus around a 3-year vs. 5-year plan. However, this decision does not need to be made now. Final strategic planning consultant can guide the Steering Committee on this issue.

- Recap on grounding SUFC documents:
  - WHO we are: [SUFC Principles](#)
  - HOW we operate: [SUFC Governance Guidelines](#)
  - WHAT we are doing: SUFC Strategic Plan 2015+
- There was much discussion about the 10k budget for this planning process and final product. There was no consensus but Jen's takeaway was we put it out for the RFP/bid process with this figure AND we review the suggestions and processes that each consultant proposes within this range. "Learn and shape our expectations/wants through their recommendations."
- Several SUFC members felt we did not have the resources (financial *and* time of members/convener) to embark on extensive process but also wanted a finished product, not just facilitated session with recommendations for SUFC to pull together. "A 10k budget sets a reasonable level of expectations from both sides." "10k could be adequate for many reasons and creates useable "side boards for SUFC." It is possible to include an additional line item in the proposed FS grant for on-going strategic planning if deemed vital.

NOTE: A Strategic Planning Ad Hoc Committee exists (Steve Sinclair, Don Winsett, Jen Hinrichs & Ann Gosline - Clean Air Task Force/CATF) but per previous conversations among the Steering Cmte, we will put out a wider call for member volunteers to ensure wider input/perspective outside just the Steering Cmte.

See attached documents:

- *SUFC working groups and committee listings*
- *Financial statement of activities from American Forests*
- *SUFC Strategic engagement strategy draft*

**REMINDERS:**

***NEXT Steering call is set for Monday, January 5<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 PM Eastern:***

***1-877-366-0711, participant code: 73095206***

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**SUFC Reception**

***US Botanic Garden, Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> PM***

**SUFC Annual Meeting**

***DC Metro Area (MD/VA/DC), Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> 8:30-4:30 (approx.)***