



Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

December 29, 2005

Dear Secretary Johanns:



Martha Ozonoff
Executive Director

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I am writing to support inclusion of Urban Forestry in the 2007 Farm Bill and the enhancement of programs dedicated to cooperative management and conservation of forest resources. State and Private Forestry programs, in particular, will become increasingly important in the future.

I am urging the Forest Service to dramatically enhance Urban and Community Forestry assistance to help cities restore urban tree canopy and actively manage canopy as a system to provide ecosystem services. The functional value of urban forests as "green infrastructure" is only beginning to be understood. In a recent study by the USDA Forest Service Northeastern Research Station of the Houston metro region, researchers found that trees provided \$456 million in annual environmental benefits to the region. Similar benefits are being realized in other regions across the country.

Furthermore, social science research reveals the importance of urban trees and parks to making cities and streetscapes more appealing to people. If land preservation efforts are to succeed, we must work toward making cities pleasant and desirable to attract and retain residents.

In the last century, the Forest Service focused on the much-needed task of responsible federal land management. This role is still critical, but the new forestry challenges of the 21st Century will center on non-federal, urban lands. Current means of cooperative assistance are inadequate to the scale of the issues.

To this end, I am asking you to:

Enhance the Following Critical Programs:

- **Urban and Community Forestry Program (U&CF)** - should be funded at a total of **\$62 million by 2010** to support:
 - a.) \$30 million for state agencies to deliver technical and financial assistance to communities in support of the four U&CF performance measures:
 - b.) \$10 million for U&CF to support better integration, delivery, and technology transfer to respond to catastrophic events, invasive pests, fire risk in the urban-suburban interface,

and other occurrences that significantly threaten urban forests and can spread to forestlands. This includes \$1.6 million for a full time technology transfer specialist to be co-housed at each of the urban forest research units.

c.) \$2 million to integrate urban forest health inventory into the FIA

d.) \$20 million for competitive Urban Tree Canopy Enhancement focus projects in 15 to 20 metropolitan areas across the country. Urban tree canopy size and health have been declining in most major cities for the last twenty years as reported by the US Forest Service. Focus projects will support multi-agency/nonprofit partnerships dedicated to achieving tree canopy goals through public, private and volunteer action, with an emphasis on maximizing functional benefits of green infrastructure for water quality, air quality, energy conservation, economic development and community revitalization.

- **Research and Development (R&D) on Urban Forests** – Urban forest research is currently funded at 3.5 million and should be increased to **\$24 million by 2015**. Research on the extent, health, structure and function of urban forests is critical to understanding how cities can best manage this resource to capture the maximum environmental services to sustain population centers.

Expand Cooperative Assistance Delivered Through State Agencies. This is the essential front line for working with private landowners and municipalities to maintain forestlands—these agencies require funding through programs like the Urban and Community Forestry Program and the Forest Stewardship Program to maintain their presence. All cooperative programs need increased capacity to address fire risk, invasive species risk, loss of open space, loss of wildlife habitat, and water supply and quality.

Create a new program for Suburban and Community Forests and Open Space Acquisition, which will help purchase land to preserve forest fragments and parcels within the developing urban/suburban interface. These areas are typically not eligible for Forest Legacy Program assistance. Providing federal seed money for land acquisition has been one of the most effective tools for conserving working forestlands. In developing suburban/urban areas, preservation of such parcels can support wildlife corridor continuity, watershed health, and other environmental management goals while providing opportunities for forest recreation for city dwellers.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Martha Ozonoff
Executive Director

cc: US Senator Barbara Boxer, US Senator Diane Feinstein, US Representative Mike Thompson, Robin Thompson, USDA Forest Service