

## 2012 Farm Bill Re-Authorization

### Talking Points

#### Background:

- This legislation (enacted every 5 yrs), provides the framework through which Congress enacts, amends and/or repeals a wide range of agricultural and conservation programs. Because the Forest Service is part of the Department of Agriculture, the Farm Bill has often been the vehicle for changes/improvements to the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act, and in turn, to urban and community forestry.
- The Urban and Community Forestry program as we know it today was enacted as part of the 1990 Farm Bill.
- SUFC proposes the Forest Service – with its unparalleled research capacity and its strong network of public and private partnerships – can play an even more significant role to help focus and promote efficient Federal investment in creating and maintaining healthy urban forests and green infrastructure.
- The SUFC is underscoring the direct connection between rural and urban landscapes (sharing air and water quality). With 85% of the U.S. population living in urban areas, the Farm Bill has a wide reaching impact on all communities.

#### STEP ONE:

##### **Encourage and facilitate interagency coordination to protect urban forest health.**

- Enables agencies to manage costs by setting mutually-agreed-to Federal priorities, roles and responsibilities -- *with no additional administrative layers.*

#### **ACTION:**

- introduce federal, regional and local agency coordination and collaboration

- establish mutually agreed to Federal priorities, roles and responsibilities.
- break down interagency boundaries
- implement cost-saving and sustainable infrastructure

## **HOW?**

1. Establish regional/metro area “coordination teams” under USDA and launch with three pilot teams
2. Continue to monitor urban forest health, and to prevent threats from invasive insects and disease that can spread beyond urban boundaries by:
  - a. Continued funding for the Early Plant Pest Detection and Surveillance Improvement Program (Section 10201, 2008 Farm Bill)
  - b. Continued support for APHIS (Animal & Plant Health Inspection Services) study on efficacy of import safeguards.

## **STEP TWO:**

**Address issues at the landscape level; promote urban trees and forests as green infrastructure.**

- The SUFC supports efforts in the next Farm Bill that include a strong role for urban forests—in connection with rural forests—to deliver clean water to downstream communities.
- No ecological boundaries separate urban, community and rural forests.

## **ACTION:**

Establish formal mechanisms for coordination among urban and rural programs and projects that restore, protect, and maintain watershed health.

## **HOW?**

1. Prioritize funding to conservation, urban forestry, land protection, watershed health, and green infrastructure programs built on comprehensive, landscape-level plans.
2. Reauthorize the Watershed Forestry Assistance Program (16 U.S.C 2103b) with program delivery guided by priorities in the Forest Action Plans.
3. Direct the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to prioritize funding to conservation, urban forestry, land protection, watershed health, and green infrastructure programs built on comprehensive, landscape-level plans.

## STEP THREE:

### Provide research, tools and resources that support local initiatives.

- Municipal governments, metropolitan planners and nongovernmental organizations can more effectively marshal resources in their own communities with common baseline data and metrics for measuring urban forest benefits. Federal and state agencies become advisors and guides, not just funders.

## ACTION

Encourage Congress to ensure that USDA Forest Service places a high priority on urban forest research.

## HOW?

USDA Forest Service should accelerate or initiate:

1. Continued development and improvement of user-friendly tools
  - a. (example: iTree, see [www.ITreetools.org](http://www.ITreetools.org))
2. Demonstration projects of best management practices and emerging technology
3. Strong technology transfer, education and information activities
  - a. (examples: cooperative extension, conservation education)
4. Creating consistent data standards for urban forests and green infrastructure
5. Role of USDA's Office of Environmental Markets in developing measures for ecosystem services provided by urban as well as rural forests
  - a. (examples: carbon sequestration, air quality, energy conservation, water quality, and stormwater abatement)

**About SUFC:** The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition (SUFC) is a network of organizations advancing a unified urban forest agenda to sustainably integrate trees and vegetation into urban settings where people live and work. Since 2004 SUFC members have advocated for the integration of trees as a vital component of sustainable infrastructure for every community. For more information visit [www.urbanforestcoalition.com](http://www.urbanforestcoalition.com) or send an email to [SUFC@rcn.com](mailto:SUFC@rcn.com).