

**A REPORT TO
THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

on the

**U.S. FOREST SERVICE URBAN
AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
SUMMARY -----	i
I. INTRODUCTION -----	1
A. Directive -----	1
B. Scope of Inquiry -----	1
C. Background -----	1
II. PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND RELATIONSHIPS -----	3
A. Program Overview -----	3
B. Program Participants -----	3
1. Congressionally-directed Projects -----	3
2. Headquarters Administration and National Commitments -----	4
3. Distribution to Forest Service Regions -----	5
4. State Recipients -----	6
III. URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY FUNDING, DISTRIBUTION, AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS -----	9
A. Funding -----	9
B. Field Distribution Process -----	10
1. Allocation of Funds to States in the Northeastern Area Region -----	11
2. Allocation of Funds to States in the Southern Region -----	13
3. Allocation of Funds to States in the Western Region -----	14
C. Available Measures of Program Accomplishment -----	16
1. Capacity Building -----	16
2. Research and Technology Transfer -----	17
3. Advancing the Profession of Urban and Community Forestry -----	17

	<u>Page</u>
4. Accomplishment Reports and Periodic State Assessments -----	18
D. Performance Standards -----	19
IV. CONSIDERATION OF MAJOR CHANGES FOR THE URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM -----	21
A. Designing New Allocation Procedures-----	21
B. Reaction to Proposed Methodology -----	23
C. Funding for Large Urban Centers Versus Small Communities Affected by New Methodology -----	23
1. Advocates for Large Urban Centers -----	24
2. Advocates for Small Communities -----	25
D. National Strategy and Funding -----	26

SUMMARY

Urban and Community Forestry Program

The Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program has been in existence since 1968 but, until 1991, the Program received minimal funding. The 1990 Farm Bill authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to provide financial, technical, and related assistance to State Foresters, local governments, and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) to enhance the UCF Program effort. As a result, funding increased dramatically from \$2.8 million in FY 1990 to over \$21 million in FY 1991. FY 2004 funding is over \$35 million. The UCF Program seeks to educate, train, and help fund those involved in forest canopy development within populated areas. Presently, about 80 percent of the nation's population reside in inner cities, suburbs, and the developing wildland-urban interface. The U.S. Forest Service has been tasked with implementation of the UCF Program.

Program Organization

The UCF Program's delivery primarily occurs at the state level, through the offices of state foresters. The Forest Service works to link diverse groups and programs within a state, including local governments and national and community-based NGOs. The UCF Program at the state level is commonly considered a "grassroots" effort.

Headquarters Administration and National Commitments

In May 2002, the Chief of the Forest Service elevated the UCF Program to a separate and equal branch within the State and Private Forestry Division and, in December 2002, hired the first UCF Director. According to a Forest Service official, this shift brought needed attention to unique and growing UCF issues. The UCF Director, with a five-person staff, directs the Program, allocating funding for his own administrative expenses, including UCF-related research using Forest Service research facilities, and in support of external UCF efforts that are more nationally or regionally oriented rather than directed at a particular state.

The UCF headquarters office funds national commitments, one of which is particularly familiar to city planners and the public, the National Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program. Its purpose is to promote awareness of the benefits of trees in communities. Membership in Tree City USA is considered prestigious and indicative of a city's progressive attitude towards a healthy living environment for those who live and work within.

Another national organization funded by UCF headquarters is the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC). NUCFAC was created under the 1990 Farm Bill to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the status of the nation's urban and community forests. NUCFAC was tasked to: (1) assist in developing the UCF Program, (2) operate a "Challenge" Cost-Share Program, and (3) conduct a review of the UCF Program every 10 years. In 2001, NUCFAC initiated its first mandated review with a final report due in March 2004.

Regional Structure and Responsibilities

While the Forest Service is divided nationally into nine regions, the UCF Program is divided into three. The UCF's Northeastern Area Region corresponds to one Forest Service region consisting of 20 states and the District of Columbia. The UCF's Southern Region, consisting of 13 states, also is identical to another Forest Service region. However, the UCF's Western Region includes the remaining 7 traditional Forest Service regions which consist of 17 states and the U.S. Pacific island territories. The three UCF regions correspond to the organizational structure of the National Association of State Foresters. Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are funded directly from headquarters' International Institute for Tropical Forestry Research Center.

The regions are responsible for fiscal integrity and quality control of the UCF Program implemented by state forestry agencies. Each region, after receiving its funding allocation from headquarters but before distribution to states, deducts its administrative costs (salaries, travel, conferences, and meetings) and all costs associated with regionally-administered UCF projects. Unique to the Northeastern Area Region are three UCF Program-funded Centers of Excellence, which, according to regional officials, assist state UCF Programs by focusing on, and providing a point of access for, common information needs, services, and research. The Centers are located on college campuses and are intended to foster community participation and volunteerism. The region is also unique in that it maintains offices in two major metropolitan areas, New York City and Philadelphia.

The regional UCF focus lies with 16 Federal Coordinators. Federal Coordinators are considered "on the ground" UCF Program managers and are the primary contact for their state counterparts, the Urban Coordinators. The Federal Coordinators' responsibilities include regular meetings with Urban Coordinators and participating in annual regional and national conferences. They may also participate with states in the review of grant applications by communities, monitor accomplishments, and review various documents from each state, such as the required 5-year state strategic plan for UCF. Many Federal Coordinators stated they communicate daily or weekly through telephone calls and e-mails, while others publish newsletters to share UCF-related information. The Federal Coordinators also serve as an additional resource for state and local officials to tap for technical advice on such topics as viable tree species for the area and identification of disease affecting specific trees.

Time spent on the UCF Program by Federal Coordinators differed markedly among the regions, from as little as 8 percent to as much as 100 percent. The extent of their knowledge and influence over states' UCF Programs tended to reflect their level of involvement. Performance appraisals of Federal Coordinators are conducted by regional management without the UCF Director's input.

State Recipients and Relationships

State forestry agencies are responsible for providing statewide leadership and delivery of UCF-related support to local communities and civic organizations. To qualify for UCF Program funding, each state is required to have an urban and community forestry program coordinator, volunteer/partnership coordinator, 5-year strategic plan, and advisory council.

State Urban Coordinators work with urban and community forestry partners to plan and deliver the state's UCF Program. This position, in most instances, is Federally funded from the states' UCF allocations. The Urban Coordinator position is considered pivotal to achieving the state's UCF plans. It is the Coordinator's responsibility to make the availability of UCF funds known to urban and local community officials, evaluate applications for project support, and provide advice and consultation on project implementation. In addition, they contribute to the creation and maintenance of critical statewide networks to make available the skills and technical services needed by their communities and grant recipients.

Program Funding Mechanism

Exactly how UCF appropriations are spent is difficult to determine because UCF headquarters does not have the ability to track funds, and it provided different versions of expenditures that cannot be reconciled. In response to Congressional concerns for equitable funding to states, the Forest Service devised an 8-factor formula in FY 2000 based on U.S. Census Bureau statistics and information generated by state Urban Coordinators. However, state foresters complained about the factors and noted there is no way to determine whether or not the funds received were in fact the result of using the formula. State representatives also claim the Forest Service used almost half of the funds for its own administration and to directly fund projects of lesser merit than projects the states could have funded with this money. According to Forest Service documents, approximately 80 percent of UCF funding over the 5-year period, FY 1999 through FY 2003, was used for field distribution. However, according to state foresters' documents, only 53 percent of the UCF Program's funds went to the states.

After satisfying its national commitments for the UCF Program, the Forest Service uses a two-tier distribution process. UCF funds are first split among the three UCF regional offices and then divided among the states in each region using different criteria in each region. The Northeastern Area Regional office takes cuts prior to distribution to its states, in addition to its own internal expenses as follows: (1) 5 percent of the funds for regional competitive grants, which they refer to as "focus funding"; (2) funding for three Centers of Excellence, at \$150,000 each; and (3) \$225,000 to each state for base funding. The balance was allocated using an abbreviated 8-factor formula; that is, using the population and number of urban communities for each state as compared to the entire Northeastern Area Region.

In the Southern Region, the allocation of dollars to its 13 states is based on historical figures. In 1991, the larger states conceded a portion of their allocations, which were based primarily on population, to less populated states to allow the latter to establish a sufficient base funding of \$150,000. The actual percentages have not changed more than 2 percent since that time even though the rate of population growth among the southern states has varied significantly. A comparison of two states in the Southern Region show the larger state currently

receiving \$67 in UCF funding per 1,000 residents compared to \$168 per 1,000 residents in a neighboring, smaller state.

Funding for the states and territories in the Western Region is even more unusual than either the Northeastern Area Region or the Southern Region because the Western Region comprises seven Forest Service regions stretching from Alaska to the Pacific territories. Each state or territory receives \$150,000 as a base fund to maintain UCF Program delivery, and the remainder of available funding is subject to the "Western-remix." The remix resulted from negotiations between area state foresters and regional Forest Service officials and has remained a constant percentage.

Program Accomplishments

It is difficult to assess the Program's effect on the declining health of urban forests. As one official observed, "Since we don't know what we had 10 years ago, we cannot measure how much we have accomplished today." The Forest Service does publish an annual accomplishment report, but it is inadequate in addressing the Program's effect on improving the health of the urban forest. The Forest Service believes the Program has raised awareness of the plight of urban forests and has marshaled resources for its protection, a process known as capacity building. Although there are some critics, the Forest Service points to the growth of the Tree City USA program from 1,500 communities in 1990 to about 3,000 communities today, as a measure of success. While some officials question the merit of the Tree City USA program, most concede that it at least creates some capacity building.

In addition, NUCFAC and UCF Program grant research efforts have led to the creation of tools that can quantify the economic benefits of a healthy urban forest. Being a relatively new discipline within traditional forestry, the UCF Program is encouraging efforts to expand the profession and increase understanding of its importance. For example, the Forest Service supports a UCF Program in a college that has graduated over 200 students in this discipline. The Forest Service also supports an effort to train and certify tree care workers through the International Society of Arboriculture. Prior to 1990, there were under 2,000 certified tree care professionals; today, there are over 15,000. Through the partnerships developed throughout the nation by the UCF Program, educational materials regarding the maintenance of the urban forest are distributed to the public, as well as tree care and nursery professionals.

Performance Standards

The Forest Service has not set any performance standards, thus leading to the inability to hold states accountable for success or failure in their efforts to implement the UCF Program. In 1997, the Forest Service devised the Performance Measures Accountability System (PMAS) to capture effort by the states. The PMAS is almost universally condemned by both Federal and state officials due to the ambiguity of its terms and its reliance on self-reporting. In the absence of a determination of what is the ultimate goal of the Program, state and Federal officials have difficulty defining, measuring, or rating performance. Forest Service officials realize this problem and view development of performance standards as a management challenge they are presently addressing.

The Forest Service also conducts a Program review of states' progress in implementing their 5-year strategic plans. However, this exercise was described variously as a "hug fest," "chat session," and generally superficial.

Proposed Program Changes

In response to Congressional concerns, the Forest Service in partnership with state officials have devised a new two-part UCF funding methodology. The first part, for headquarters funding to the three regions, is to be based on total urban area population, developed land area, and the number of participating communities, weighted 50 percent, 25 percent, and 25 percent, respectively. This methodology will favor those regions and states with large population centers. The second part, composed of eight measures, is directed at capacity building, and ties funding from the regions to the states directly to performance. The eight measures are: (1) matching funds, (2) state grant participation, (3) local UCF investments, (4) education and training, (5) inventories and management plans, (6) professional staffing commitment, (7) ordinances and laws, and (8) local advocacy organizations. The Forest Service also intends to cap discretionary spending by the regions at 10 percent, with concurrence by the UCF Director, with the remainder going to the states. The Forest Service is currently circulating this proposed formula to the states and has received some criticism related to its complexity, the extra paperwork requirements, and having more control placed on the program than in past years. Further refinements will be made, as warranted, according to Forest Service officials. The new methodology does not address desires expressed by state officials to limit the administrative expenses incurred by Forest Service headquarters and regional offices and funds directed to nationally and regionally sponsored projects.

Funding Balance Between Large Urban Centers and Small Communities

Enabling legislation does not indicate a clear Congressional preference between large urban centers and small communities. To some extent, this issue has polarized states having a majority of one or the other. The rationale used by the Forest Service for increasing its emphasis on the larger, more populated areas is that, to do otherwise, would amount to investing scarce resources in a manner in which only a relatively few people benefit. Due to confusion over the terms, large urban center and small community, the Forest Service is adopting U.S. Census Bureau definitions.

National Strategy and Funding

The Forest Service, while requiring strategic planning from its partners, has exempted itself from this process. To address this lack of Program vision, the Forest Service has recently produced a one-page document entitled "Blueprint for the Future." This document lists management strategies for the Forest Service and its partners to develop in order to arrive at three outcomes (visions/goals) related to engaging every U.S. community in a commitment to maintain, protect, and expand urban and community forestry. The Forest Service recognizes that the states will be wary of any attempt by the Forest Service to set Program direction or strategic goals. The states believe that, due to the uniqueness of each state's needs, any attempt to set national goals will only lead to more Federal control and less funding.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Directive

By letter dated September 5, 2003, the Committee directed an investigation of the management and implementation of the Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service. The investigation and report were to concentrate on, but not be limited to: (1) an examination of headquarters and regional program management, including an assessment of funding allocation methods and an appraisal of the process used to measure program accomplishments and govern funding decisions; (2) an assessment of the UCF program operation in the field, along with an assessment of the interaction between the Forest Service, the state foresters and other interested parties, including an evaluation of the balance this program provides in program delivery to large, urban centers versus small communities; and (3) a summary of the accomplishments of this program to date.

B. Scope of Inquiry

This report does not provide results of a comprehensive examination of the Forest Service's implementation of the UCF program; it addresses those UCF program issues tasked by the Committee Directive. This investigation was conducted through interviews and the review of documents provided by Forest Service officials from their headquarters in Washington, D.C., and UCF Program offices in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, Oregon, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Puerto Rico. Interviews also were conducted with, and documents provided by, state forestry officials in 28 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico, as well as representatives of the National Association of State Foresters, the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and state urban forestry councils. The states, Washington, D.C., and U.S. territories hereafter are referred to as "states."

C. Background

Forestry on private lands has been supported by Federal agencies for more than 125 years, and local governments have recommended or mandated that homeowners plant trees on their property and along public streets as far back as the 1700s. Cooperation among Federal and state agencies on urban forestry issues became important during the mid-1960s, when Dutch Elm disease was destroying an overwhelming number of mature American elm trees nationwide. Local communities requested technical assistance from their states. In turn, states requested permission to use Federal funds to help fight the disease. In 1968, the Cooperative Forest Management Act of 1950 was amended to authorize the use of Federal funds to implement a UCF Program to fight this threat to urban forests.

Various studies have shown that healthy trees and forests in urban areas contribute to improved air and water quality, watershed function, energy conservation, and social well-being. However, the ever-increasing urban development throughout the country often runs counter to

healthy ecological communities. The quality of life in cities and towns is enhanced by effective state programs that encourage the growth and maintenance of community trees and forests. In recognition of this need, Congress enhanced the UCF Program with the passage of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (CFAA), Public Law 95-313, as amended by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, Public Law 101-624, also referred to as the 1990 Farm Bill. This legislation authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to provide financial, technical, and related assistance to state foresters to sponsor urban and community forestry projects with local governments and NGOs. The purposes defined in the CFAA include: (1) providing education and technical assistance to state and local organizations and homeowners on the benefits of maintaining and expanding appropriate forest cover, (2) providing competitive matching grants for UCF Program projects, (3) implementing tree planting programs and demonstration projects to illustrate the benefits of maintaining and creating forest cover and tree stands, and (4) expanding research and educational efforts intended to improve the understanding of tree growth and maintenance. The Forest Service, designated by the Secretary of Agriculture to administer the Program, published guidelines in 1977, revised in 1999, to implement the UCF Program.

Broadly defined, UCF is the comprehensive management of trees, forests, and related natural resources in populated areas, such as the inner cities, suburbs, the outer areas of cities and towns, and communities of various sizes. Altogether, these areas comprise more than 70 million acres of urban forest and contain 80 percent of the nation's population. Until the CFAA was amended in 1990, the UCF Program was funded at the minimal level of between \$1 million and \$3 million annually. It has since grown to over \$35.2 million for FY 2004.

II. PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

A. Program Overview

One individual aptly described UCF as the sole Forest Service program which looks inward to cities and their unique forestry problems in contrast to the overwhelming agency focus outward towards the nation's vast national forests. The UCF Program's delivery primarily occurs at the state level, through the offices of State Foresters. The Forest Service works closely with the National Association of State Foresters, founded in 1920, and its members to link diverse groups and programs within a state. Many partners, including local governments and nationally and community-based NGOs, have a common goal to promote understanding and management of urban and community forests.

UCF funds are used for an extremely wide variety of purposes, such as paying administrative and other expenses at the Federal headquarters, regional, and state levels; supporting basic research; sponsoring individual Forest Service-directed projects nationally and regionally; and supporting local projects, which some consider to be at the "end of the food chain." Local-level governments vie for funds to sponsor projects ranging from the planting of trees by a group of Boy Scouts, conducting an inventory of the number, type, and health of trees in an inner city, to printing brochures to raise awareness of the healthful and aesthetic qualities of trees in an urban area. With such a far-ranging mandate, UCF is intended to accomplish its purposes by providing the "seed money" towards sustaining a viable program of community education and involvement.

B. Program Participants

The UCF Program is commonly considered a "grassroots" effort whereby states receive Federal funds through UCF regions which, in turn, are used by participating communities to address Program goals. While the majority of UCF appropriations are distributed in this fashion, a portion is first deducted to support Congressionally-directed projects, for internal headquarters administration and research, and to support selected national efforts and organizations. Together, these deductions accounted for some \$5.1 million, or 14.1 percent, of the \$36.4 million Program in FY 2003.

1. Congressionally-directed Projects

Typically, Congressional earmarks for specified projects have ranged from \$1.4 million to nearly \$3.4 million annually during the last 5 years. Between FY 1999 and FY 2003, over 72 percent of earmark funding was reserved for the Pennsylvania forestry program and Chicago inner city/wilderness projects.

UCF Program participants do not dispute that the funds used for the Pennsylvania and Chicago efforts support worthy projects. The Pennsylvania forestry initiative, for example, is used to foster community awareness and participation in forestry-based activities throughout

the post-industrial region. The Chicago project addresses the area's native ecosystem, including prairies, woodlands, grasslands, and wetlands. However, Program participants expressed concern that such funds are taken "off the top" rather than received as a result of competition among many other equally deserving projects. They added that, instead of receiving seed money to initiate projects and generate greater community support to continue such efforts on their own, the earmarks have evolved into a yearly entitlement program. The Pennsylvania program, they noted, has received congressionally-directed funds for the past 9 years, while the Chicago projects have received such support for the past 12 years.

2. Headquarters Administration and National Commitments

The UCF Director, with a five-person staff, directs the program, allocating funding for his own administrative expenses, including UCF-related research using Forest Service research facilities, and to support external UCF efforts that are more nationally or regionally oriented rather than directed at a particular state. Together, in FY 2003, these activities accounted for approximately \$2.0 million, or 5 percent, of total UCF appropriations.

For many years, the UCF Program was one of a number of programs within the Cooperative Forestry Branch of the State and Private Forestry Division of the Forest Service. The Cooperative Forestry Branch is focused more on "traditional" forests, both publicly and privately owned, to help sustain and protect them from wildfires. In May 2002, in response to a request from the Chief of the Forest Service, the National Association of State Foresters completed a review of the operations of the State and Private Forestry Division's Washington D.C. office and recommended that the UCF Program be elevated to a separate and equal branch within the Division. The Chief of the Forest Service accepted this recommendation and hired a UCF Director in December 2002. According to a Forest Service official, this shift brought needed attention to unique and growing UCF Program issues.

The UCF headquarters office also funds national commitments, one of which is particularly familiar to city planners and the public, the National Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program. Its purpose is to promote awareness of the benefits of trees in communities. Those wishing to become members must have the following four "standards" in place: (1) establishment of a "tree board" composed of concerned volunteer citizens, (2) a tree ordinance requiring the establishment and implementation of a community forestry work plan, (3) a \$2 per capita budget to help finance its activities such as tree planting and maintenance, and (4) observance of an annual Arbor Day. Membership to Tree City USA is considered prestigious and indicative of a city's progressive attitude towards a healthy living environment for those who live and work within.

Another national organization funded by UCF headquarters is the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC). NUCFAC was created under the Farm Bill of 1990 to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the status of the nation's urban and community forests. NUCFAC was tasked to: (1) assist in developing the UCF Program, (2) operate a "Challenge" Cost-Share Program, and (3) conduct a review of the UCF Program every 10 years. In 2001, NUCFAC initiated its first mandated review with a final report due in March

2004. The Forest Service aids NUCFAC operations by providing funding and administrative support, assisting with NUCFAC communications, and by facilitating meetings.

Since its creation, NUCFAC has received \$1 million annually from the UCF Program. These funds are used to support its Challenge Cost-Share Program, which is focused on grants for UCF-related projects with national applicability. The concept of challenge cost-share grants is to require participants to contribute an equal amount in order to receive the grant. Current grants awarded by NUCFAC range in funding from a low of \$3,000 to a university for a 2-year study to determine the impact of nitrogen fertilizer in stemming the damage to trees by insects, to approximately \$246,000 for TreeLink, a comprehensive UCF website available to the public. Supporters of NUCFAC point to such projects as proof of its value and contributions.

NUCFAC's detractors, on the other hand, contend that such efforts are no more than the Forest Service could undertake for itself. Some questioned the relative value of NUCFAC projects while others accused the Council of "operating a good old boys' network," whereby grants are received on the basis of nepotism. They also complained that they often are not made aware of NUCFAC-sponsored projects being conducted in their states. Those making such criticisms tended to be state UCF recipients who consider NUCFAC to be their direct competition for limited Program funds.

3. Distribution to Forest Service Regions

After meeting its commitments for Congressional earmarks, internal, and national commitments, UCF headquarters distributes the remainder of its funds to its regional offices for further allocation to state recipients. Field distribution of UCF constitutes the largest single segment of the program, accounting for about \$31.3 million, or almost 86 percent, of the FY 2003 appropriation.

While the Forest Service is divided nationally into nine regions, the UCF Program is divided into three. The UCF's Northeastern Area Region corresponds to one Forest Service region consisting of 20 states and the District of Columbia. The UCF's Southern Region, consisting of 13 states, also is identical to another Forest Service region. However, the UCF's Western Region includes the remaining 7 traditional Forest Service regions which consist of 17 states and the U.S. Pacific island territories. The three UCF regions correspond to the organizational structure of the National Association of State Foresters. Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands had initially received UCF Program funds through the Southern Region, but are now funded directly from headquarters as part of the International Institute for Tropical Forestry Research Center.

The regions are responsible for fiscal integrity and quality control of the UCF Program implemented by state forestry agencies. Each region, after receiving its funding allocation from headquarters but before distribution to states, deducts its administrative costs (salaries, travel, conferences, and meetings) and all costs associated with regionally-administered UCF projects. Unique to the NA Region are three UCF Program-funded Centers of Excellence,

which, according to regional officials, assist state UCF programs by focusing on, and providing a point of access for, common information needs, services, and research. The centers are located on college campuses and are intended to foster community participation and volunteerism. The region is also unique in that it maintains offices in two major metropolitan areas, New York City and Philadelphia.

The regional UCF focus lies with 16 Federal Coordinators. Federal Coordinators are considered "on the ground" UCF Program managers and are the primary contact with their state counterparts, the Urban Coordinator. The Federal Coordinators' responsibilities include regular meetings with Urban Coordinators and participating in annual regional and national conferences. They also may participate with states in the review of grant applications by communities, monitor accomplishments, and review various documents from each state, such as the required 5-year state strategic plan for UCF. Many Federal Coordinators stated they communicate daily or weekly through telephone calls and e-mails, while others publish newsletters to share UCF-related information. The Federal Coordinators also serve as an additional resource for state and local officials to tap for technical advice on such topics as viable tree species for the area and identification of disease affecting specific trees.

While most Federal Coordinators are actively involved with their states' UCF-related programs, the extent of this involvement varies widely. Some also are involved with other Cooperative Forestry programs, so that time spent on the UCF Program ranges from as little as 8 percent to almost 100 percent. As may be implied, the Federal Coordinators on the lower end of the scale appeared to have little knowledge, oversight, or influence over the states' UCF-sponsored programs within their jurisdiction.

The Federal Coordinators do not report to the UCF Director. Instead, they continue to report to the regional directors of Cooperative Forestry. The UCF Director neither rates the performance of the Federal Coordinators nor signs off on their performance reviews. A Forest Service official noted that, although the Forest Service is a decentralized organization, the UCF Director needs to have some control over the Federal Coordinators. However, such control was considered counter to Forest Service culture.

4. State Recipients

State forestry agencies are responsible for providing statewide leadership and delivery of UCF-related support to local communities and civic organizations. When UCF Program funds reach the states, they may or may not lose their Federal identity. To qualify for UCF Program funding, each state is required to have an urban and community forestry program coordinator, volunteer/partnership coordinator, 5-year strategic plan, and advisory council.

The state Urban Coordinator works with urban and community forestry partners to plan and deliver the state's UCF Program. This position, in most instances, is Federally funded from the states' UCF allocations. The Urban Coordinator position is considered pivotal to achieving the states' UCF plans. It is the Coordinator's responsibility to make the availability of UCF funds known to urban and local community officials, evaluate applications for project support, and provide advice and consultation on project implementation. In addition, they

contribute to the creation and maintenance of critical statewide networks, which link diverse groups with management programs and delivery systems and make available the skills and technical services needed by their communities and grant recipients.

The Volunteer Coordinator, also a paid position usually within the Urban Coordinator's Office, determines the best method to "get the UCF message" to the communities, using methods such as proper tree planting demonstrations and the printing of brochures. The private sector as well as non-profit organizations also rely on the Volunteer Coordinator as someone in the state bureaucracy who understands their concerns. This position is staffed in a variety of ways. In some states, it is contracted out to non-profit organizations to administer while, in others, a full-time state employee or several employees staff it as an auxiliary responsibility.

Enabling legislation permits UCF Program funds to pay for state-incurred expenses to administer its UCF Program as well as to provide grants to support specific projects, usually by local governments and community organizations. Often these UCF funds are supplemented by state-budgeted funding. As a result, most states use their UCF funding to pay for all Program-related salaries and administrative costs, with remaining funds going to grants. Other states rely on some combination of UCF and state funding to pay for state salaries and administrative costs. One official noted that state costs were paid by his state, thus freeing up all UCF funding for direct support to community projects. An official from another state noted just the opposite; all Federal funds went to state costs and none to grants. The official added, however, that his program is viable because he promotes urban and community forestry statewide and serves as a technical resource whenever needed. Both Federal and state officials agree that the majority of the state positions would be eliminated due to tight state budgets, despite their perceived importance. Some added, however, that the states should pay for the state UCF positions, at the very least, as their endorsement of this effort.

Whatever remains after state costs are deducted goes to communities in the form of grant projects. The amount of funds states provide for individual projects range greatly, with many between \$1,000 and \$5,000, especially for smaller communities. All grants, according to Federal requirements, stipulate a dollar-for-dollar or "in-kind" match to the funds provided. The size of the project and corresponding expense is often much higher, however, in large, much more densely populated cities. State officials advised that, in such large areas, small-dollar projects simply do not garner sufficient attention from city government officials. Other state officials prefer to make grants to the smaller communities within larger cities rather than to compete with other "big city" problems.

The grant process generally entails state advisory councils sending out requests for proposals for potential projects to all communities throughout the state. Advisory councils, as required by the Forest Service, are responsible for advising state foresters in the development of program emphasis, priorities, and implementation and on periodic reviews and revisions of states' strategic plans. The councils typically consist of representatives from state and local governmental agencies, industry, non-profit and community-based organizations, and grassroots volunteers concerned with urban and community forestry. Other than travel expenses

reimbursed through UCF funds, the council members serve as unpaid volunteers. The councils are usually involved in the entire grant process, from initiating proposal requests to making recommendations on the final grant selection. A council representative stated that their primary objective is to strengthen the program through such activities as implementing tree ordinances, and, as private citizens, to act as strong advocates for the Program with local leaders. Once projects are funded, it is the responsibility of the state to monitor compliance by the project recipients.

Whether a state uses its entire UCF allocation for state expenses or exclusively for grants, or for a combination of the two, its activities are supposed to be in support of the purpose, goals, and direction stated in the Forest Service-mandated 5-year strategic plan. In essence, the strategic plan is to contain the state's "vision" for the use of UCF funds and serve as a guide by which progress can be measured. Broadly stated, the goals in one typical state's plan included geographical information systems and community assessments; protection against fire, insects, and disease; and, the organizational development necessary to accomplish its goals.

Closely aligned with advisory councils are NGOs. In fact, they are composed of many of the same organizations, namely, tree care companies, natural resource professionals, nurseries, landscape contractors, developers, home builders, and non-profit organizations. NGOs encourage and support the development and implementation of UCF programs and, according to Federal and state officials, play a major role in providing expertise, financial, and in-kind support for grant projects, while serving on local and state advisory councils, committees, or boards. Representatives of non-profit organizations believe, because of their close connection with communities, they are a vital conduit of outreach to the local communities. A Forest Service official noted that non-profit organizations are much better at organizing local communities than the Forest Service. Some non-profit representatives stated they would like more involvement with the Forest Service and the states in meeting national goals. In their opinion, the greater the number of people involved, particularly at the grassroots level, the more effective the Program will be in any given area. Local non-profit organizations are generally among those receiving funding through state grants for specific urban and community projects.

**III. URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY FUNDING,
DISTRIBUTION, AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

A. Funding

Although formal UCF legislation has existed since 1968, the UCF Program did not receive a significant funding increase until after passage of the 1990 Farm Bill. In FY 1991, the UCF Program received over \$21 million, a six-and-one-half-fold increase from the previous year's \$2.8 million appropriation. Since that time, the UCF Program's appropriation has grown by 71 percent, to approximately \$36 million. Forest Service officials provided a 5-year profile of the available funding for the UCF Program, as presented below:

Urban and Community Forestry Available Funding FY 1999 Through FY 2003 --\$ In Thousands--					
	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
Congressional Earmarks	\$ 3,400	\$ 1,450	\$ 1,450	\$ 1,400	\$ 3,179
Washington Office					
Internal Operations	1,390	2,013	1,801	2,150	1,485
External Operations	405	964	2,011	560	470
Field Distribution	25,345	26,838	26,877	31,226	31,257
TOTAL	\$30,540	\$31,265	\$32,139	\$35,336	\$36,391

The dollar amounts shown above, as with other financial documents provided by the Forest Service, cannot be exactly matched to Congressional appropriations. Further, many Forest Service financial documents cannot be reconciled with one another. According to Forest Service officials, available funding includes the prior year carry-over of funds as well as reprogramming actions, but greater detail about such transactions was not available. Originally, Congressional earmarked funds for FY 1999 were incorrectly recorded as almost \$12 million instead of \$3.4 million. These officials claim that a Forest Service financial reporting system change from FY 1999 to FY 2000 further complicated the compilation of data. A Forest Service official admitted his frustration in trying to make sense of the financial records and conceded that the Forest Service had siphoned off "some" UCF funds for other purposes such as holding multi-program national conventions. The UCF headquarters office does not have the ability to independently track its funds but must rely on Forest Service accounting systems whose shortcomings and inaccuracies are considered substantial.

B. Field Distribution Process

After the initial funding requirements are satisfied at the headquarters level, the remainder is divided among the three UCF regions based on an 8-factor formula. The formula was devised in response to a Congressional concern for an equitable distribution methodology and first used for FY 2000 field distribution. The factors are: (1) current population; (2) projected population change; (3) number of communities with a population over 100; (4) number of communities with a population range of 1,000 to 49,999; (5) number of housing starts; (6) total acres of built-up areas; (7) funds awarded for completed UCF grants to communities; and (8) Tree City USA communities as a percentage of the total number of communities. Data for items 1 through 6 are based on U.S. Census Bureau statistics. Data for items 7 and 8 are taken from the Forest Service's Performance Measures Accountability System (PMAS). PMAS was designed in response to the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, Public Law 103-62, to capture performance by numerically measuring set criteria which have evolved over the years in the states and territories within the Cooperative Forestry Programs, such as the number of "communities assisted," and "the number of trees planted." Since 2001, the Forest Service's National Information Center has managed the web application and database that the states and territories use to enter PMAS data. Data is to be submitted by mid-November after the end of each Federal fiscal year. In 2002, the form for UCF data was revised to provide a short narrative on one successful project for each state and territory.

State foresters representing less densely populated states note that the eight factors place too much emphasis on population. Moreover, they also complain that items 3 and 4 result in double counting of all communities over 100 in population and again for those that have between 1,000 and 49,999 in population. State foresters also complained about using Tree City USA as a factor because, although the components required to be declared a "Tree City" are verifiable, it does not, in and of itself, guarantee that a viable UCF Program is in place. They also noted that a large community, such as Montgomery County, Maryland is counted as one Tree City USA community serving over 800,000 people. In contrast, the entire State of Wyoming, which leads the nation with the number of Tree City USA communities, has a lower population than Montgomery County but receives a higher rating for this factor.

For each factor, every state is weighed in relative terms to the other states to determine its percentage of the total. Then, the cumulative scores of the states in each region are used to divide the funds available for field distribution. The regions then take a portion for internal administration and regional projects and redistribute the remainder to the states; however, the redistribution to the states is not based on the 8-factor formula used for the initial distribution to the regions.

For FY 1999 through FY 2003, wide variations were found when comparing actual funding distribution among the three UCF regions to the distribution that would have occurred had the 8-factor formula been strictly followed. For example, in FY 2003, the 8-factor formula's scores produced the following regional distribution of available funding: Northeastern Area Region, 34 percent; Southern Region, 36 percent; and Western Region, 30 percent. However, the actual funding distribution produced the following allocation statistics: Northeastern Area Region,

40.7 percent; Southern Region, 31.7 percent; and Western Region, 27.6 percent. In terms of actual funds, the Northeastern Area Region received over \$2 million more than the 8-factor scores would have dictated. The Northeastern Area Region's gain was at the expense of the other two regions. In another year, according to Forest Service documents, one region received over \$9 million less than the formula would have required to the benefit of the other two regions.

According to Forest Service documents, approximately 80 percent of UCF funding over the 5-year period, FY 1999 through FY 2003, was used for field distribution. However, according to state foresters' documents, only 53 percent of the UCF Program's funds went to the states with the remainder used for Forest Service administration and national or regional commitments that were, in their view, of lesser merit than state-selected projects. In FY 2002, according to some Forest Service documents, approximately \$31.2 million out of the \$35.3 million in available funds went for field distribution, but only approximately \$18.3 million, or 59 percent of the field distributed funds and 52 percent of the total UCF funds, were provided to the states. According to Forest Service officials, once the funds are relinquished to the regions, UCF headquarters is no longer able to track them and, therefore, reliance must necessarily be placed on the regions to properly manage them.

Many state officials acknowledged they were aware of the 8-factor formula, but they could not explain how it was used and further noted there is no way of knowing if what they received was related to the scores in the formula. Some of these officials believe the formula is manipulated to obtain a predetermined outcome. Most Federal and state officials acknowledged that state funding amounts are predominately based on historical trends since states tend to receive approximately the same amount they received the previous year.

A common theme in the distribution of UCF funds to the states is the understanding of the need for each state to have some ability to deliver the program. According to state officials, with the increased funding afforded by the Farm Bill, the Forest Service developed the standard of providing \$150,000 base funding to each state to provide an infrastructure for the UCF Program and to address those elements that the Forest Service determined to be crucial for success. The \$150,000 was awarded in segments such that a state would receive \$60,000 if it maintained an Urban Coordinator position, \$60,000 for a Volunteer/Partnership Coordinator position or its full-time \$15,000 for establishing and seeking the advice of an advisory council, and \$15,000 for devising a UCF 5-year strategic plan. Once a state satisfied these four requirements, it was eligible to receive additional discretionary funds for the UCF Program. The principle of insuring a minimal capacity to administer the program through base funding has remained in the UCF Program, although the actual dollar amount now varies among the regions. The allocation methodology also differs in each region for distributing the remaining funds.

1. Allocation of Funds to States in the Northeastern Area Region

According to Forest Service headquarters documents, the following chart depicts the amount of total funding that went to the Northeastern Area Region and the amount of funding provided to states within the region, either directly to the state forestry agencies or to communities and organizations within those states. The difference between these two figures

should represent one or a combination of the following: (1) the amount of funding used by the region to administer the program, (2) funds carried over to the next fiscal year, (3) funds returned to headquarters, (4) funds available for reprogramming, and (5) funds available to support regional or even national UCF projects.

Northeastern Area Region Funding Profile FY 1999 Through FY 2003 --\$ In Thousands--				
Fiscal Year	Total Region Funding	Reported Funding to States	Funding Retained by the Region	Percentage of Funds Retained by the Region
1999	\$12,044	\$12,319	-\$275	-2
2000	\$10,499	\$5,747	\$4,752	45
2001	\$11,615	\$5,800	\$5,815	50
2002	\$12,930	\$3,967	\$8,963	69
2003	\$12,371	\$8,981	\$3,390	27

The above chart shows that the Northeastern Area Region provided more money to its states than it had available in FY 1999 while, in other years, internal administration and other uses consumed an abnormally high proportion of available funds. The 5-year average shows the Northeastern Area Region held back over 38 percent from its states. Forest Service officials were unable to explain these inconsistencies.

The initial cuts from the Northeastern Area Region field distribution allocation, not counting internal expenses, according to Northeastern Area Regional Forest Service officials, include: (1) 5 percent of the funds for regional competitive grants, which they refer to as "focus funding;" (2) funding for three Centers of Excellence at \$150,000 each; and (3) \$225,000 to each state for base funding. Also, according to these officials, the balance of funds was allocated using an abbreviated 8-factor formula; that is, using the population and number of urban communities for each state as compared to the entire Northeastern Area Region. However, state officials complained about not having a larger role in the Northeastern Area Region's fund-distribution decisions and were of the opinion that Federal officials should not be directly administering UCF grants. State officials voiced frustration that the Northeastern Area Region's competitive grant process rewarded projects that were less beneficial than the "meat and potatoes" projects they had identified in their states. A Forest Service official defended the focus funding and Centers of Excellence expenses, claiming these special projects, such as the development of a hand-held computer for conducting tree inventories and research of invasive plant species, will provide long-term benefits for all communities. The official further noted that states cannot afford to fund these projects and that the loss in UCF funding for each of the 20 states and the District of Columbia is minimal.

The preceding table, depicting the Northeastern Area Region's funding profile, contains a wide variance in the amount and percentage of funds retained by the region from year to year. While such figures may be indicative of distribution problems, they may be equally indicative of extremely bad records management. The following is offered to illustrate such inaccuracies. In comparing FY 2003 information on one particular state, according to figures provided by the UCF headquarters, this state was provided \$519,500 in UCF Program funds, while the Northeastern Area Regional office's figures show the state was provided \$510,000. While the difference in these figures may not be so great, according to the state's documents, it received only \$358,000. In addition to the above funds, communities and organizations within the state received UCF funds directly from the Forest Service with notification to state officials about the recipient and funding amount. According to figures from UCF headquarters, an additional \$497,000 was provided to such recipients in that state, while the Northeastern Area Regional office's figures show an additional \$387,100 was provided. However, according to state documents, an additional \$373,000 was provided. Altogether, according to state records, the total amount of UCF funding actually received in the state for FY 2003 was \$731,000. This is \$166,100 less than the figures provided by the Northeastern Area Regional Office and \$285,500 less than headquarters' records indicate.

2. Allocation of Funds to States
in the Southern Region

According to UCF headquarters documents, the following chart depicts the amount of total funding provided to the Southern Region and the amount of funding provided, in turn, to the Southern Region states, either directly or to communities and organizations in those states.

Southern Region Funding Profile FY 1999 Through FY 2003 --\$ In Thousands--				
Fiscal Year	Total Region Funding	Reported Funding to States	Funding Retained by the Region	Percentage of Funds Retained by the Region
1999	\$7,435	\$7,519	-\$84	-1
2000	\$7,338	\$6,122	\$1,216	17
2001	\$7,658	\$8,447	-\$789	-10
2002	\$9,355	\$7,604	\$1,751	19
2003	\$9,644	\$9,532	\$112	1

Like the Northeastern Area Region, records indicate this region provided more funds to states than was available in FY 1999. It also provided more funds than were available in FY 2001. In FY 2003, the region expended only 1 percent of its funds for purposes other than

state grants which seems equally suspect. The 5-year average shows the Southern Region held back approximately 5 percent from its states. With obvious inconsistencies in 3 of the 5 years, this average seems questionable as well. Again, Forest Service officials were unable to explain these differences.

The method used to distribute funds to Southern Region states is vastly different from the methods used in the Northeastern Area Region. In the Southern Region, the allocation of dollars to its 13 states is based on historical figures; that is, the percentage that each state received in the Southern Region has remained relatively constant since the initial distribution agreement in 1991. At that time, the larger states conceded a portion of their allocations, which were based primarily on population, to the less populated states to allow the latter to establish a sufficient base funding of \$150,000. According to Forest Service records, in comparing the funding distribution from 1991 to 2003, the actual percentages have not changed more than 2 percent, even though the rate of population growth among the southern states has varied significantly. In effect, the more populated states currently subsidize the less populated states to an even greater extent than in the initial agreement. Officials from one of the largest states in the region stated that, in FY 2003, they received \$621,000 less than they would have received if the funds were distributed on the basis of population. In comparing the UCF Program's funds per capita, this state received only 40 percent of the funding it should have received as compared to the amount received by a neighboring state (\$67 per thousand residents compared to \$168).

3. Allocation of Funds to States
in the Western Region

The following chart, derived from Forest Service headquarters documents, depicts the amount of total funding provided to the Western Region and the amount of funding provided to the Western Region states, either directly or to communities and organizations in those states:

Western Region Funding Profile FY 1999 Through FY 2003 --\$ In Thousands--				
Fiscal Year	Total Funding Region	Reported Funding to states	Funding Retained by the Region	Percentage of Funds Retained by the Region
1999	\$6,538	\$5,783	\$755	12
2000	\$6,934	\$5,967	\$967	14
2001	\$7,601	\$7,580	\$21	0
2002	\$8,289	\$6,683	\$1,606	19
2003	\$8,402	\$8,120	\$282	3

As with the other UCF regions, the figures shown in the above chart for this region fluctuate from year to year. Even though the records for this region do not show that more dollars were sent to the states than were received, the 0 percent and 3 percent for FY 2001 and FY 2003, respectively, for internal administration and other uses are exceptionally low, especially when

considering that each of the seven traditional Forest Service regions within the UCF Western Region have staff that are involved in the UCF Program. With 2 of the 5 years being questionable, a 5-year average of approximately 10 percent is equally suspect. Forest Service officials, again, were unable to explain the inconsistencies.

Funding for the states and territories in the Western Region is even more unusual than either the Northeastern Area Region or the Southern Region. The UCF Western Region includes the following traditional Forest Service regions: Northern, Intermountain, Rocky Mountain, Southwest, Pacific Southwest, Pacific Northwest, and Alaska. The UCF Western Region's share of the field distributed funds also is allegedly based on the additive 8-factor formula scores of the 23 states and territories associated with the Region. However, the actual distribution among the seven regions could not be explained. According to Forest Service officials, each state and territory in the Western Region receives \$150,000 as a base fund to maintain UCF Program delivery, and the remainder of available funding is subject to the "Western-remix." The remix resulted from negotiations between area state foresters and regional Forest Service officials. Officials in the seven Forest Service regions within the UCF Western region continue to honor the allocation percentage for each of their states.

Few funds are set aside for regional projects in the Western Region. Also, according to Forest Service officials, if a state provides a compelling need for additional funds for a specific project, and the other states in that region concur, funds are added to the state's base before distribution of the remaining funds, according to traditional percentages. However, according to state and regional Forest Service officials, these traditional percentages continue long after major population shifts have occurred among the states.

According to state and Southwest Region (traditional Forest Service region) officials, the region has relied on the initial agreement of a 56/44 percent split between its two states that has not changed, even though the population factor would dictate a 66/34 percentage split. Similarly, according to state and Forest Service officials in the Pacific Northwest Region, the funding allocation has remained at a 62/38 percentage split, and there is never more than a 10 percent reduction from previous years.

Forest Service officials in the Pacific Southwest Region with two states and six Pacific territories advised that, after the state Urban Coordinators establish their spending plans, the state foresters band together and basically disregard their proposals and follow a procedure that gives each state the same relative amount as in the past. In the Alaska Region, with only one

state, the only issue is the split between the region and the state. According to a Forest Service official, the state always receives 80 percent of the UCF funding.

C. Available Measures of Program Accomplishment

Forestry officials at the Federal and state levels concede that finding the "correct" measures by which to judge the UCF Program has been a perpetual problem. However, several measures currently used include capacity building, research and technology transfer, efforts to advance urban forestry as a profession, and the Forest Service's periodic review of state performance.

1. Capacity Building

One measurement used by the Forest Service to gauge the UCF Program's impact on the health of urban forests is its effectiveness in raising the public's awareness to the point of action to preserve and protect such forests, a process known as capacity building. The Forest Service points to the following indicators of capacity building progress:

- The success of the National Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program is due, in large part, to UCF Program support. This program is supported by UCF Program funding made directly to the National Arbor Day Foundation and, according to Forest Service officials, has grown from 1,500 communities in 1990 to just under 3,000 currently.
- Forest Service officials maintain that the UCF Program has been instrumental in developing grassroots participation. In addition to state Advisory Councils, the Program has encouraged the growth of NGOs. A recent survey funded by the Forest Service found that, of the 700 NGOs responding, almost 30 percent got started in the 14 years since the 1990 Farm Bill was passed. The rest were created between 1900 and 1991, for an average of about 55 per decade. These NGOs are an education and advocacy force that encourage localities to adopt controls to protect and expand their tree canopy while promoting sound management of that canopy. As a result, many local governments and elected leaders now consider urban forestry activities as part of their management and decision-making functions. Annual statistics collected from the states show that, from 1997 to the present, the number of communities actively involved in managing tree programs and maintaining urban forest management plans rose from 2,700 to 4,500.
- A recently completed 10-year review of the UCF Program by an independent research group, which was awarded a challenge cost share grant by NUCFAC, concluded that:

"By any measure of activity, the Forest Service is right in the middle of the urban forestry community or network. On one hand, it is the financial glue that holds the community

together. Most state and local programs acknowledge that they would dry up and disappear without Federal support. The Forest Service is one of the two affiliates/associates mentioned by members of the community. The Forest Service has reached every state and territory, from national organizations to those that operate at the community level. The penetration of the program is pretty amazing. The growth of organizations since the 1990 Farm Bill increased funding is tremendous."

One state official expressed the view of many, stating: "If someone looked at where my state was in 1990 and where it is today in urban tree forestry, the success would be beyond peoples' wildest imaginations...the interest that this Program has instilled in people being aware of trees within their communities cannot be measured."

2. Research and Technology Transfer

Forest Service officials highlight the importance of their research and technology transfer program to the health of the urban forest. The UCF Program supports research both through its own work and NUCFAC grants to address natural threats, as well as to increase the understanding of how urban forests help communities. For example, UCF Program-funded research has determined that the 90,000 street and park trees in Modesto, California provide almost \$5 million of benefits each year in ameliorating the effects of air pollution, storm water run-off, and extreme weather temperatures.

3. Advancing the Profession of Urban and Community Forestry

As pointed out by a Forest Service official, the profession of UCF is something of a hybrid, combining arboriculture, the care and management of individual trees, with traditional forest management, and the care and management of groups of trees. Most forestry practitioners, according to these officials, do not always see the link between traditional forestry and the management of trees in urban areas. According to one state official, there are presently only two state foresters in the nation who have a professional background in UCF. The Forest Service is using UCF Program funds to support efforts to expand UCF's professional base, as well as to educate the public. The Forest Service points to the following accomplishments in this effort:

- The Program provided support to a university to develop a UCF curriculum. Over 200 students have graduated with this degree and, in 2002 alone, over 35 were placed in UCF Federal, state, and local jobs.
- Prior to 1990, an Arborist Certification for a tree care professional was virtually unknown. Forest Service officials advised that almost anyone could hold

themselves out as a tree care professional. The Forest Service, utilizing UCF Program funds, partnered with the International Society of Arboriculture to establish a training course for professional tree care certification. In 1990, almost 2,000 people were certified, and this number has since grown to approximately 15,000. The UCF Program has coordinated an effort to insure consumer education on the importance of utilizing an International Society of Arboriculture-certified arborist for work at homes or businesses to insure a professional job.

- The Forest Service claims that the UCF Program and its vast network of state and local partners has had a significant impact in educating consumers, as well as tree care and nursery professionals, regarding the importance of planting tree stock appropriate to their urban areas. This effort is directed at discouraging the use of trees with undesirable qualities or prone to insects and disease problems, thus protecting the health of the urban forest.

4. Accomplishment Reports and Periodic State Assessments

The Forest Service publishes a yearly, 200-plus-page UCF report, listing specific accomplishments for each state and territory, but much of the information is considered inadequate as a basis for drawing broad-based conclusions about program effectiveness. For example, while each state lists "number of technical assists to communities," Forest Service officials explained that an assist could be anything from forwarding a requested brochure to a town to helping conduct a major tree survey. Lacking a proper basis of measurement or agreed-upon standards, the report does not answer the basic question of how this Program has addressed Congressional concerns, expressed in the CFAA, about the declining health of urban forests. One Federal official observed, "The UCF Program has been a good Program and has had good results, all for a small amount of money, but it is difficult to measure success because no one has conducted a baseline of air quality, tree coverage, quality of life, health of the urban forests, et cetera. Since we don't know what we had 10 years ago, we cannot measure how much we have accomplished today."

Accomplishments are also addressed by Federal and state forestry officials during Program reviews conducted once every 5 years with each of the 59 Program partners. These reviews are conducted by Forest Service personnel from the region in which the state is situated, along with other states' Urban Coordinators. The reviewers discuss the Program with state officials and other interested parties. At the end of the review, a report is prepared with recommendations to insure the effective and efficient administration of the state's Program. In actuality, this review was described by state officials as a 2-day, "not very intensive review, basically, a hug fest" and as a "chat-session, jeans-wearing, ride-around type of event." They point out that, although a list of recommendations to improve the state's Program is drawn up, it can be ignored by the state as long as it is following the broad mandate of the UCF legislation. As one state official observed, "The Forest Service came up with a list of recommendations, but they were mostly of an administrative and record-keeping nature, not focusing on what went into

the ground accomplishments. I don't want my staff spending a lot of time on administrative matters but working with partners and putting things into the ground."

One state official advised that, because the states have a strong interest in seeing the UCF Program succeed in order to continue to receive funding, the period between reviews should be shortened to perhaps every 3 years and a more thorough review should be conducted to give the UCF Programs more credibility and silence critics.

D. Performance Standards

Forest Service officials concede they have not used any performance standards on UCF Program implementation, thus leading to an inability to hold states accountable for success or failure against a set standard or in relation to other states. The only system presently in existence to capture accomplishments by the states in the UCF Program is the PMAS. However, PMAS is almost universally condemned by both state and Federal officials. As one Forest Service official observed,

"PMAS is a disaster if it is utilized to determine accomplishments and serve as a basis for funds allocation because of the numerous shortcomings in it. For example the definition of important terms, such as the term 'communities,' is ambiguous and it is left to the states to interpret the meanings. Since the system is a self-reporting tool, potential corruption of the system is obvious. I heard of a case in one state where the Federal Coordinator told the Urban Coordinator to change her numbers, and she stated, 'Ok, let me guess again.'"

This official also pointed out that the PMAS makes little allowance for telling "stories of successful projects." The form provides only one opportunity to provide narrative and that section is limited to a 500-character descriptive field, which is considered totally inadequate. Other Forest Service officials noted that, if the PMAS was fine-tuned, the ambiguity of the language clarified, and, most importantly, a system of independent verification of the submitted data created, then the PMAS could possibly become a reliable tool for measuring capacity building by states and territories.

When asked about performance measurements used to judge the relative worth of the different projects they fund, some state officials advised they do not rank projects. They admitted that they have not determined how to define performance or decide which projects have more merit than others. One state official proposed the rhetorical question of how to judge the relative worth of funds used to produce a pamphlet for the states' sixth graders versus funds used to produce the first tree survey in a town. In the absence of performance standards, they do not believe the data being archived in the PMAS is the type needed to decide which project is superior to another. In their opinion, until a determination on how to place a relative value on such dissimilar activities, how to define merit, and how to gather the necessary data to equitably make such determinations, measuring performance will remain a problem. They do not have the answers. As pointed out by Federal and state officials, the fundamental problem with defining

standards in the UCF Program is the lack of any ultimate goals. A review of the legislation and hearings preceding enactment of the UCF Program does not produce further insights.

Other Federal and state officials argue that, before improvement can be measured, a baseline of data needs to be established. In order to establish a baseline, one must first measure the tree canopy present in not only all of the cities but also nationwide. The Northern Eastern Area Region has recognized this need and has started a pilot project in Wisconsin and New York to measure these states' entire tree canopies. Once this baseline is established, the location and trends of tree canopy loss by both man and nature can be identified. According to these officials, loss of trees may not be stopped, but it can be anticipated and slowed and performance standards set accordingly. They advocate establishing the baseline before proceeding with the establishment of well thought out and vetted performance standards. Senior headquarters UCF officials have recognized this problem and advised they accept development of performance standards as a management challenge.

IV. CONSIDERATION OF MAJOR CHANGES FOR THE URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM

A. Designing New Allocation Procedures

In response to Congressional concerns for instituting an equitable distribution methodology for the states and to enhance the amount of UCF funds for large metropolitan areas, a UCF Program Allocation Work Group, comprised of state and Forest Service officials, has prepared and proposed an alternative methodology for distributing funds to Forest Service regions and then, from the regions to the states. According to a January 2004 proposal from the Work Group, which has been circulated to interested parties for comment, the alternative process will incorporate four principles: (1) reward states for achieving the goals of the CFAA, (2) establish an equitable distribution of funds between urban and rural areas, (3) provide flexibility within Forest Service regions for unique focus areas, and (4) include funding for high population areas. Forest Service officials advised that the proposed methodology will be further refined to reflect state concerns and recommendations.

Under this methodology, after the Forest Service receives a UCF appropriation, the initial funding requirements will be satisfied for Congressional earmarks, the Washington headquarters office, and nationally-significant projects. Following that, the remainder will be divided among the three regions based on: (1) their total urban area population, weighted 50 percent; (2) the total amount of developed land area, weighted 25 percent; and (3) the total number of participating communities, weighted 25 percent. The first two of the above factors are to be determined by U.S. Census Bureau statistics, while the number of participating communities are to be determined by information provided by state UCF coordinators in the PMAS system.

After the regional offices receive their share of the field distributed UCF funds, each region will then withhold up to 10 percent for regional projects in high population urban areas and deduct regional administrative expenses. The remainder will be distributed to the states in their respective region using two new performance elements. Half of the funds available to the regions for further distribution to the states will be determined in accordance with Performance Element One. It is to be used for the first cut in determining the funding level for individual states and will be based on the sum of the population of communities participating in UCF Programs within a state divided by that state's total population. Depending upon the resulting percentage, each state will receive a minimum of \$75,000 for up to 10 percent participation in UCF Programs to a maximum of \$225,000 for over 76 percent participation.

This concept rewards states with communities participating in UCF activities but does not address need. For example, a large, wealthy community with a healthy, vibrant urban forestry program and active citizenship may not need UCF assistance but would easily qualify. It could be argued that greater benefit might be achieved if the Forest Service rewarded states which target more needy communities. To illustrate, in Virginia, the city of Richmond, with few UCF initiatives would benefit greatly from UCF funding, while Virginia Beach with a healthy economy, has a progressive UCF program and is not as dependent on Federal/state support. Similarly, the Borough of

Manhattan, New York has concerned private-interest groups that have restored city parks, while the adjoining Borough of the Bronx has one of the sparsest tree canopies in the nation. Forest Service officials advised that the UCF Program tries to provide the incentives, but they cannot force participation.

The remaining half of the regional funds subject to distribution will be allocated using eight new and separate performance measures grouped as Performance Element Two. The scores which each state receives will be used for comparison with the scores of other states within the region. The Performance Element Two factors are considered the "central core" measures of the Program to build capacity; that is, to grow the base of UCF support. Performance Element Two factors are to include:

1. Programmatic Matching Funds: the amount of UCF matching funds and/or in-kind support;
2. Cost Share Grant Participation: the total dollar amount of grants the state provides to communities;
3. Local Investments in UCF Activities: the total number of constituents served by communities where the per capita tree care budget is \$2 or more;
4. Education and Training: the number of education and training hours involving UCF-related activities;
5. Inventories and Management Plans: the total population of communities that have and use tree inventories and management plans;
6. Professional Staffing Commitment: the total population of communities that employ foresters or other UCF-related professionals;
7. Ordinances and Laws: the total population of communities that adopt and enforce UCF-related ordinances; and,
8. Local Advocacy Organizations: the total population of communities that have an active tree board, council, or similar organization.

The first measure would be worth 20 percent of the available funds, the second measure would be worth 10 percent, and the remaining six measures can be worth individually from 0 to 70 percent of the remaining funds and will be weighted differently to reflect regional differences and priorities.

Another feature of the new methodology is the incorporation of greater control over the discretion which the Forest Service regions now have in their funding allocations to the states. Under the new methodology, only 10 percent of the funds available for allocation will be

discretionary; all of the remaining funds must be distributed according to the formula. In addition, funds that are discretionary can be used only for special purposes such as to address particular state needs or to reward individual state initiatives. In those instances, the regional office must receive written approval from a designated State Forestry Association representative and, more significantly, from the UCF Program Director.

B. Reaction to Proposed Methodology

State forestry officials have received a copy of the proposed new methodology for comment. They noted that, until they can "run the numbers;" that is, calculate how the formula affects them, they could not support it. The officials added they used to be able to estimate what they were likely to receive, but the new methodology is so complex and dependent on other states' data, this is now impossible. Because no one has apparently gone through an actual set of calculations to see how the formula works in practice, the officials contend that it remains a question as to whether it will adequately address Congressional concerns or meet the purposes of the CFAA. While one official asserted that a formula that distributes funds "equitably" would be an improvement over the current system, another added that the proposed process "provides more questions than answers."

One state official noted that, for a program so simple in concept, it sure has become complex in practice. Another official advised that "these eight performance measures will ensure that state programs spend a large portion of their time as Federal data collectors instead of local assistance providers." Still another state official echoed similar views, stating: "This formula is going to require us to report a lot more things, meaning more time will be spent counting instead of growing and improving UCF assistance efforts." In response, a Forest Service official advised that most states already collect the required information and that those which do not, should collect it. Moreover, the official noted that the new methodology will not be used until FY 2006, in order to give all states adequate time to collect the necessary data.

Complaints from both Federal and state officials continued on the use of PMAS data, which is entered by state officials according to self interpretation and is to be used as a primary source of information for weighing the measures in Element Two. A headquarters official acknowledged such problems, but noted that the eight new performance measurements will largely replace the elements traditionally associated with PMAS, and they will be verifiable.

The new methodology also does not address desires expressed by state officials to limit the administrative expenses incurred by Forest Service headquarters and regional offices and funds for nationally and regionally sponsored projects. Opposition will likely continue until the Forest Service is able to articulate the universal benefits to be derived from its special projects. State officials advised that such Forest Service-directed projects should have to compete, but they have not in the past and will not under the proposed methodology.

C. Funding for Large Urban Centers Versus Small Communities Affected by New Methodology

Another issue related to the purposes and goals of UCF concerns whether the program was intended to support large, congested urban areas at one extreme versus smaller, more rural communities at the other. To some extent, the issue has polarized large, sparsely populated states, such as those in the mid-West, in contrast to those with a greater number of more densely-populated cities. Enabling UCF legislation and supporting documents do not clearly indicate whether there was a Congressional preference and further, there is even confusion among state and Federal officials as to what constitutes a large urban center or small community. As one state official pointed out, "Where do urban and rural forests begin and end? It's all one forest." The greatest limitation again, however, is that it does not consider financial need or conditions. A smaller, more wealthy community, surrounded by large tracks of forests, may easily qualify for UCF assistance, according to the above criteria. However, officials, both Federal and state, adopt a view similar to that expressed by one state Urban Coordinator:

"People can't even decide on a national level what constitutes a large urban area and what is a small community. We work very hard to get an even distribution throughout the state. We work to support the communities that are active and interested in developing a healthy tree program and help others to understand the value of trees. After all, you can have small communities in large urban areas. That's what a neighborhood is. We don't try to define them. We try to get the information into those areas that need it. So we don't look at population density. We look at only what is the best project to fund, no matter where the geographical location in the state."

The Forest Service recognizes the confusion over terms and advises they intend to use the U.S. Census Bureau's definitions of urban areas and to do away with such terms as small communities.

1. Advocates for Large Urban Centers

Federal and state advocates for large, urban centers to receive the majority of the funding argue that:

- The UCF Program should promote tree planting in vegetation-barren cities where most of the population live and work, thus benefiting the greatest number of people.
- Urban problems are so massive that trees cannot compete for funding among other funds. UCF is the life line for such efforts.
- Trees moderate extreme weather conditions, especially in large cities, thereby reducing heating and cooling costs.
- Greening the cities entices people to live in them, thus reducing urban sprawl.

- Small, rural communities often are surrounded by large forests and receive the associated benefits on a daily basis.

Some state and Federal officials believe large, urban areas are not receiving their due recognition because of forest officials' natural focus on traditional forests and nearby rural communities. Most forestry officials are in closer contact with such rural communities, and this association leads to a disproportionate amount of funding going to smaller communities.

One state forestry official, recently retired from the U.S. Forest Service, blames the U.S. Forest Service for what he considers disproportionate funding by states to small communities. In his view, the Forest Service in the last 10 years has tried to "be everything to everybody" and is not prioritizing its work or saying "no" to anyone. As a result, the Forest Service tries to do too much for such a small Program. In this official's opinion, the purpose of the UCF Program is not to capture dollars for the states but to improve the health of the urban forests located in large congested cities.

2. Advocates for Small Communities

Other Federal and state advocates, especially those in large mid-western and western states, argue that small communities should be the primary recipients of UCF funds because:

- They have the same problems as large, urban communities, only on a smaller scale.
- Many big cities already have sophisticated staffing, some with Urban Foresters. They do not need the help this Program provides. It is the smaller, growing community that does not have an infrastructure in place and needs help to grow its program until it becomes self-sufficient.
- In smaller communities, for a lot less money, the UCF Program attracts interest and provides opportunities to educate local leaders, which can lead to political change, such as ordinances to protect the urban forest. The same amount of funds would go unnoticed in a large city and would cost more in administrative costs than the value of the grant itself.
- Some small communities are on the frontlines of the wildland-urban interface. Such areas are characterized by areas of urban sprawl where homes, especially new subdivisions, press against public and private wildlands, such as private non-industrial or commercial forest land or land under public ownership and management. As one state official noted: "The metropolitan area has needs, but those needs are very different from areas of change, where the canopy cover is decreasing. The action is on the fringe, with new interstates and growing communities." These advocates believe strongly that the real battleground is in

the wildland-urban interface to hold back urban sprawl and control the advancing developers. As one Federal official stated, "You don't stop a forest fire in the middle of the fire, but you back off and build a firebreak. You want to build capacity in those small towns that are about to be swallowed up by the ever-expanding urban centers so they can put controls in place requiring the preservation of what will become the urban forest."

According to Forest Service officials, while smaller, more rural communities will continue to receive funding, the new methodology clearly rewards states which orient their UCF Program more towards larger, urban areas. In these officials' opinion, it simply makes no sense to invest scarce resources in a manner in which only a relatively few people benefit. Consequently, the revised methodology will reward state Programs which favor the greatest number of people possible. The officials added that there clearly will be winners and losers due to this change and that some states will have to reorient their Program to increase their chances of receiving a greater share of the available funding.

D. National Strategy and Funding

Although the Forest Service requires each of its UCF partners to produce a strategic program plan every 5 years, and progress is gauged against such plans, the Forest Service has not put itself through the same rigor to produce a "vision" for the Program as a whole. Forest Service regional management, in individually deciding how much of available funds will be subject to distribution and in what manner they will be distributed, has created a de facto regional program.

According to Forest Service officials, the new allocation methodology, if adopted and, if used by Forest Service regions to distribute funds to state forestry agencies, will be a major ingredient in a new UCF document called "Blueprint for the Future." For perspective, this one-page document, notes that:

“After more than 10 years of significant federal support, the Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program is at a crossroads. Although there is increased awareness of UCF, and our nation is better off now than when we began, there are still difficult hurdles to overcome: state partner involvement is inconsistent, partners at all levels often do not function as a cohesive unit, and program accountability and delivery have not been prioritized. Finally, program visibility at all levels has suffered.”

The Blueprint has been distributed to regional offices and states for comment, along with a draft of the new allocation methodology. It lists six "management strategies" to achieve three defined outcomes, as shown below:

“Management Strategies:

- Identify state priorities within UCF program guidelines, and formulate state plans and performance measures that encourage states to achieve these priorities.
- Develop and implement regional and national strategies and plans that actively support state-identified UCF priorities.
- Improve operational efficiencies through regional and national performance measures that are tied to UCF program guidelines, budget, and strategic planning documents/processes.
- Eliminate duplication of effort and strengthen UCF program delivery with internal and external partners using a framework of measured performance and accountability.
- Encourage all partners to address how their organizations will grow stronger each year.
- Increase national awareness of the UCF program and how it benefits our communities.

Outcomes (Vision/Goals):

- Every community in the United States is participating in UCF via local, state and/or national partners.
- Every community in the United States has employed, or is seeking to employ, a professional urban forester to bring UCF to where it matters most, our home towns.
- Urban and community forest resources are maintained, protected, and expanded nationwide.”

UCF headquarters staff noted that most responses on the Blueprint indicate that it is considered "pretty solid." However, states are wary of any attempt by the Forest Service to set national strategic goals. From their perspective, greater program direction by the Federal Government will only limit their prerogatives. A common sentiment expressed is that only general Forest Service guidance is needed for states to run their programs as they see fit to meet individual state needs and priorities. State officials voiced strong beliefs that the Forest Service should recognize that each state is unique with different requirements, and they need the freedom to mold their programs to fit those requirements. It is their concern that development of a national or even regional UCF statement of strategic goals may result in less state funding and more Federal control of the Program.

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