

Agricultural Stewardship Association, American Forests, Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust, Appalachian Mountain Club, Arch Cape Sanitary District, Bayfield Regional Conservancy, Berks Nature, Blue Mountain Land Trust, Champlain Area Trails, Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts, Columbia Land Conservancy, Columbia Land Trust, Connecticut Forest and Park Association, Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Conservation Northwest, Cornwall Conservation Trust, Deschutes Land Trust, Eastern Oregon Legacy Lands Fund, Epic-Environmental Protection Information Center, Forest Society of Maine, Forterra, Great Peninsula Conservancy, Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Jefferson Land Trust, Kaniksu Land Trust, Klamath Forest Alliance, McKenzie River Trust, Mahoosuc Pathways, Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust, Mainspring Conservation Trust, Milan Community Forest, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, Monadnock Conservancy, Mt. Adams Resource Stewards, Naturaland Trust, New England Forestry Foundation, Nisqually Land Trust, North Coast Land Conservancy, Open Space Institute, Orange County Land Trust, Oregon Coast Alliance, Oregon Coast Community Forest Association, Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust, Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Salisbury Association Land Trust, Saratoga PLAN, Sharon Land Trust, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, Society of American Foresters, Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative, Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, Sustainable Northwest, Tar River Land Conservancy, The Climate Trust, The Colebrook Land Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, The Northern Forest Center, The Trust for Public Land, Town of Dorset (Vermont), Town of West Windsor (Vermont), Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Upper Valley Land Trust, U.S. Forest Capital, LLC, Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Woodlands Association, Wallowa Land Trust, Washington Association of Land Trusts, Westchester Land Trust, Western New York Land Conservancy, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Wild Rivers Land Trust, Willamalane Park and Recreation District

May 22, 2017

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
House Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Senate Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
House Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Senate Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Committee

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

As representatives of a broad coalition of conservation and forestry organizations and municipal agencies, we are writing to express our strong support for the U.S. Forest Service's Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (CFP). Since its first grant round in FY 2012, CFP has supported nearly three dozen community forest projects across 17 states and territories. However, demand for CFP funding far outstrips its availability, so we urge you to build upon the program's impressive achievements by including \$5 million for the program in the Fiscal Year 2018 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

CFP is an innovative tool to advance the important goals of supporting local economies, increasing opportunities for Americans to connect with forests in their own communities and fostering new public-private partnerships. We believe that these connections are vital to communities' livability and economic well-being. Since Fiscal Year 2012, CFP has contributed to this important effort by assisting local communities to secure forests for public recreation, sustainable forestry, and wildlife habitat and water quality preservation.

As you know, CFP provides matching funds to help local government entities, Indian tribes, and non-profit organizations purchase forestlands threatened with development for local ownership and management as community forests. The program directly addresses the urgent need to prevent the widespread conversion of private forests to non-forest uses. This threat was highlighted in the U.S. Forest Service report *Private Forests, Public Benefits*, which projected that 57 million acres of America's private forests could experience a substantial increase in housing density by 2030.

In its brief history, CFP has made substantial progress in preserving forests by combining federal and non-federal resources. Indeed, through the latest round of CFP grants, project partners leveraged \$10.6 million in federal funds to secure \$34.5 million in non-federal funding. As a result of these partnerships, more than 15,000 acres of private forestlands have been or soon will be acquired to create new or expand existing community forests. This impressive leveraging ratio demonstrates the willingness of local entities to match federal funding with significant commitments of funding and other resources.

Given the strong interest in the Community Forest Program and its impressive leveraging successes, we urge you to sustain the program's growing momentum by providing greater funding to meet demand. **A \$5 million investment in the Community Forest Program as part of the FY 2018 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill will allow the program to benefit even more communities across the nation.**

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we hope you will give it the highest possible consideration.

Sincerely,

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