

Agricultural Stewardship Association, American Forests, Appalachian Mountain Club, Bayfield Regional Conservancy, Berks Nature, Blue Mountain Land Trust, Champlain Area Trails, Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts, Columbia Land Conservancy, Inc., Columbia Land Trust, Conservation Northwest, Cornwall Conservation Trust, Epic-Environmental Protection Information Center, Great Peninsula Conservancy, Greenbelt Land Trust, Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Jefferson Land Trust, Kestrel Land Trust, Klamath Forest Alliance, Klamath Lake Land Trust, Land Trust Alliance, Lower Nehalem Community Trust, McKenzie River Trust, Mainspring Conservation Trust, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, Mt. Adams Resource Stewards, Nisqually Land Trust, Northern Forest Center, Open Space Institute, Orange County Land Trust, Otsego Land Trust, Pacific Forest Trust, Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust, Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Roanoke Electric Cooperative and Subsidiaries, Salisbury Association Land Trust, San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council, Sharon Land Trust, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, Sustainable Northwest, Tar River Land Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, The Wilderness Society, Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Woodlands Association, Wallowa Land Trust, Wallowa Resources, Westchester Land Trust, Western New York Land Conservancy, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Willamalane Park and Recreation District

March 14, 2016

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 Senators and Representatives:

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). Through the past four years of funding availability, this program has supported 27 community forest projects across 15 states and territories. However, because demand for CFP funding far outstrips its availability, we urge you to build upon the program's impressive achievements by including \$5 million for the program in the Fiscal Year 2017 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 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 \$8.7 million in federal funds to secure \$31.8 million in non-federal funding. As a result of these partnerships, more than 14,000 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 program as part of the FY 2017 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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