

SUFC Policy Workgroup Call

October 4, 2013, 2:00 pm EST

Participants: Rebecca Turner, Brent Keith, Sarah, Faith Campbell, Kevin O'Hara, Brenna Mannion, Gerry Gray, John Barnwell, Rebecca Arvin, Danielle Watson, Cara Boucher, Jen Hinrichs

1. Hill Strategy and meeting updates

- a. Gerry and Becky met with Congresswoman Pingree's staff October 2nd. Pingree did submit program request for U&CF and works closely with Rep. Moran's office. Pingree's staff thought that a continuing resolution would be the next step and a full appropriations process was not on the table.
- b. Becky, Brent, and Gerry met with Rep. Wasserman-Schultz staff. Despite the lockdown, we were able to get our message across that U&CF needs to be added back.
- c. Faith sent an update regarding TNC's meetings:

The Nature Conservancy met with staff of 2 members of the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee on 9 October to express our gratitude for their past conservation efforts and reiterate our support for continued funding of the USDA Forest Service, with a special focus on the Urban Forests program. Participating in the meetings for TNC were Faith Campbell, Chris Topik, and the government relations staffer for the relevant states - Isis Stark for Minnesota and Dave Higby for New York.

We met with Philip Schmidt of Rep. Serrano's office. Philip expressed his strong support for the urban program. He was grateful for the materials - the SUFC fact sheet on urban forest benefits, the 2-pp description of SUFC, a copy of our Appropriations letter; and some additional material on urban forest benefits and the risks to them that I had prepared as talking points.

I believe we can count on Rep. Serrano's continued support for this program - if/when the opportunity arises. We also discussed other issues, especially the impact that fire "emergency" funding has on all parts of the "Interior" appropriations bill.

We met with Paula Sunde of Rep. McCollum's office. TNC awarded Rep. McCollum a plaque for her past support for conservation programs. Paula said she wished she had had the SUFC materials earlier, during the markup. Since I expect that an SUFC team visited Rep. McCollum during the lobby day in February, this tells me that we need to have a more continuous presence, at least during the appropriations lobbying season, so that our materials and positions don't get lost over time. Paula prefers to receive materials electronically rather than on paper. I believe we will have Rep. McCollum's support when/if the opportunity arises - but we might need to remind her!

2. Government Shutdown update and what it means for our Hill strategy

- a. Our October 4th discussion had us pondering the uncertain future of appropriations and funding issues.

3. Forest Climate Working Group recommendations on climate action strategy plan

- a. The FCWG was very supportive of adding urban forest recommendations to the platform. High level meetings with Robert Bonnie and CEQ also emphasized their interest in urban forests as a key part of the President's Action Plan.
- b. Becky, Gerry and Danielle submitted a more in depth set of recommendations based on SUFC interests and agenda items.
- c. Jen encouraged the group to reach out to Undersecretary Bonnie. We may be able to work with his office to have him address the Fly-in Reception.

4. Other

- a. ASLA is working on a green infrastructure bill
 - i. Working with NRDC, and others. The bill which addresses the best practices for green urban development and stormwater management, is being introduced in the House.
 - ii. While SUFC had not endorsed a similar bill in the past, once introduced, the Policy Committee will discuss options.
- b. Adding other talking points to SUFC congressional meetings
 - i. While our main focus is U&CF funding during our meetings, tying in other organizational priorities as they relate is an acceptable approach to the Policy Workgroup.
 - ii. Fire suppression funding was discussed at the tail end of the House meetings to emphasize how solutions to the fire issue help the Forest Service overall.
- c. On Oct 28th, SUFC is hosting a briefing on the National Academy of Sciences workshop to review the outcomes of the workshop and the findings in the report. Printed reports will be available at the briefing and electronic versions will be emailed.