

April 28, 2021

Appalachian Mountain Club, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Arch Cape Water District, Bayou Land Conservancy, Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce, City of Montpelier, Comubia River Estuary Study Taskforce, Connecticut Forest and Park Association, Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Conservation Northwest, Downeast Lakes Land Trust, High Peaks Alliance, Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Inland Woods and Trails, Mahoosuc Land Trust, Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust, McKenzie River Trust, Milan Community Forest, Mt. Adams Resource Stewards, Naturaland Trust, New England Forestry Foundation, Nisqually Community Forest, North Coasts Land Conservancy, Northern Forest Center, Northwest Community Forest Coalition, Open Space Institute, Openlands, Oregon Coast Alliance, Presumpscot Regional Land Trust, Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trail, Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Save our Saluda, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire, Southern Oregon Land Conservancy, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, The Land Trust Alliance, The Lyme Timber Company, The Trust for Public Land, The Vital Ground Foundation, The Wilderness Society, Town of Butte Falls, Town of Hanover, Town of Williston, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Vermont Land Trust, Wallowa Land Trust, Wallowa Resources, Washington Association of Land Trusts, Washington Environmental Council, Western Foothills Land Trust, Western New York Land Conservancy, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Whatcom Land Trust, Woodstock Conservation Commission

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol H-307
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
The Capitol S-128
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
The Capitol S-128
Washington, DC 20515

Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby,

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 establishment in 2012, CFP has supported 66 community forest projects across 23 states and territories. Additionally, these investments in conservation have been used to leverage more than twice the federal funds. Building on this track record of success, the demand for CFP funding has grown significantly

and currently far exceeds the available appropriation. For these reasons, we strongly urge you to build upon the CFP's history of achievement by increasing the program's appropriation from \$4 million to \$8 million in the Fiscal Year 2022 Interior and EPA Appropriations bill.

CFP is an innovative tool to advance the Administration's 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 community based 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, project partners leveraged \$11.4 million in federal funds to secure \$25.1 million in non-federal funding. As a result of these partnerships, more than 16,000 acres of private forestlands have been acquired by local communities, 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. **An \$8 million investment in the program as part of the FY 2022 Interior and EPA 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.