Michigan Urban and Community Forestry Council

An advisory committee to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources

January 6, 2023

Mr. Jeff Stampfly
State Forester, Chief - Forest Resources Division
Michigan Department of Natural Resources
PO Box 30452
Lansing, MI 48909

Mr. Stampfly,

As Chair of the Michigan Urban and Community Forestry Council (MUCFC), I present this annual letter of engagement to you on behalf of our advisory group. The MUCFC is a collaboration of partners, working to help the State improve urban and community forests (UCF) by advising and guiding the DNR in delivering the UCF program and helping initiate discussions, engage stakeholders, build partnerships, and spread awareness of the immense value that trees provide to our built and urbanizing communities.

2022 has been a significant year for UCF on many levels. This letter is a summary of some significant issues, priorities and accomplishments we would like to make you aware of as it relates to Michigan DNR's UCF program and more broadly throughout the state and country.

Nationally, federal support for UCF has never been stronger. The current administration has actively worked to develop favorable policies and committed financial assistance at unprecedented levels to ensure a legacy of meaningful impacts on the ground.   Some specific examples include:

- passage of the Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act
- passage of the Inflation Reduction Act

With these historic investments in UCF, stakeholders in Michigan and around the country are well-positioned to reshape our communities and urban forests for decades to come.

In Michigan, state (DNR) support and leadership for UCF has yielded increased staffing and renewal of a key partnership with MSU Forestry. Adding staff capacity will enhance the MSU Forestry program's ability to more efficiently deliver critical technical assistance where and when needed. Likewise, a renewed 5-year agreement to support urban and community forestry through the Partnership for Ecosystem Research (PERM), will sustain and expand important educational, research and outreach opportunities and collaboration between DNR, MSU and partners. The importance of these items cannot be overstated.

On a personal level, I have recently completed my first year as the chair of the MUCFC. This is a position I ascended to unexpectedly when the previous Chair (Dean Hay) relocated out of state for a new job. While UCF is not my area of specialization, it is one that I am excited by and see great opportunity for expanding into my work with tribal communities, and in under-engaged areas of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

 In 2022, the MUCFC supported efforts of the DNR's UCF program to deliver the following outcomes:
- 1 – Number of new staff added to the UCF program, effectively doubling its capacity
- 2 – Number of new national and regional studies documenting the economic impacts of UCF in Michigan and nationally
- 5 – Years of a new DNR/MSU PERM agreement (2022-27) to support UCF in Michigan
- 8 – Number of new community tree inventories and management plans developed with assistance from the DNR's Community Forestry Grant program
- 41 – Number of proposals received requesting $481,000 in funding through the FY23 [Community Forestry Grant program](#)
- 126 – Number of communities certified as Tree City USA in Michigan for 2021
- 500 – Number of new shade trees planted in 7 communities in southeast Michigan through a federal [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grant](#).
- 5,384,503 - Number of people living in communities provided educational, technical and/or financial assistance through DNR's UCF program.
- 76% - Percentage of Michigan communities managing or developing programs to plant, protect and maintain their urban and community trees and forests.
- $105,000 – Funding awarded by DNR UCF program to 33 communities for tree planting grants through 2022-23 utility sponsored [DTE Tree Grant](#) partnership with ReLeaf Michigan
- $475,652 – Amount of federal funding secured by DNR's UCF program to support the Detroit Tree Equity Partnership with American Forests and City of Detroit
- 14,333 – Number of volunteer labor hours documented by UCF program on supported projects
- 17,000 – Number of subscribers to the UCF Program's [weekly e-news digest](#)
- 68,437 – Number of trees recorded on [MI Trees](#) as planted by the public as part of the [DNR's 50M tree planting pledge](#) as part of the global 1T.org campaign.

The MUCFC recognizes that the strategies outlined in the State's Forest Action Plan will help monitor long term trends, establish priorities, and track progress in community forestry efforts. To these ends, we must identify, analyze and incorporate appropriate data to create local and statewide strategies that protect, enhance, and expand urban forests. The annual Forest Action Plan stakeholder engagement sessions will help ensure that we maintain, track and discuss progress towards these goals.

As we look ahead to 2023 and beyond, MUCFC is encouraged by the excitement and energy surrounding this field nationally and in Michigan. Together with the State and our partners we can help provide resources that help local communities better, and more equitably, manage their urban and community forests for the benefit of all.

With this in mind, MUCFC is excited to endorse several key priorities for the program in 2023:

- support the state and federal UCF programs and issues at all state and national meetings (e.g., NASF);
- harness the opportunity of increased federal support for UCF to continue to strategically grow out the DNR's UCF program staff capacity;
- utilize increased federal funding to enhance and expand UCF grant programs to meet the needs of stakeholders;
- invest in partnerships that expand UCF program capacity and regional reach in Michigan;
- facilitate events and opportunities to improve engagement between the UCF sector and DNR (e.g. Coffee with State Forester, Tree City USA Awards banquet);
- support the interconnection and collaboration between all cooperative forestry programs in the DNR and with stakeholders to appropriately plan and prepare for all threats, challenges and opportunities (e.g. climate, invasive species, equity) across the urban to rural spectrum.

On behalf of MUCFC, I would like to thank you and the DNR for your outstanding leadership and sustained support for conservation issues generally, and urban and community forestry in particular. We are encouraged by the progress made to date and even more excited by the opportunities coming in the new year. I welcome your thoughts and feedback and would be happy to arrange a mutually convenient time to meet in-person or virtually to engage further.

Sincerely,

Rachel Tarpey, Chair
Michigan Urban and Community Forestry Council