

Michigan Urban and Community Forestry Council

An advisory committee to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources



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

January 4, 2024

Dear Mr. Stampfly,

As Chair of the Michigan Urban and Community Forestry Council (MUCFC), I'm pleased to share this annual letter of engagement with you on behalf of our advisory group. 2023 has been an extraordinary year for UCF nationally and in Michigan. Thanks largely to the federal investment of \$1.5 billion through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), UCF is truly having its moment. In Michigan, the state and its local partners have secured over \$40 million dollars in federal IRA funding – more than 45 other states. More than ever before, the DNR's UCF program is now looked to for leadership and support in helping coordinate the effective delivery of these programs to improve the condition and extent of Michigan's urban forest resources across the state.

I write today to emphasize the critical role that you, as the state forester, play in building awareness and gaining support for UCF with the DNR, our elected officials and throughout the state. To help in that cause, the MUCFC, working with the DNR's UCF Program staff, provides the following list of noteworthy program accomplishments and highlights from this past year for your awareness.

- **\$7.5 million** – Federal IRA funding awarded to the DNR's UCF Program directly
- **\$32.9 million** – Federal IRA funding awarded to local partners across Michigan
- **5,445,366** - Number of people living in communities that were provided educational, technical and/or financial assistance through DNR's UCF program
- **16,492** – Number of trees planted with financial support from the DNR's UCF Program
- **117** and **\$13.53** – Number of communities certified and avg. per capita spending by MI Tree Cities
- **14,944** and **\$418,432** - hours and value of volunteer labor contributed to projects supported by the DNR's UCF Program
- **18** and **\$398,756** – Number of proposals and funding approved (of 51 received and \$1.3 million requested) through the FY24 DNR Urban Forestry and IRA Grant program
- **19,363** and **15%** – Total number and annual growth of subscribers to the DNR UCF Program's weekly e-news digest
- **17.1 million** and **101,816** – Total number of trees recorded on MI Trees as planted by the DNR (17 million) and public (101,816) as part of the DNR's 50M tree planting pledge

Many great things are happening because of the state's existing UCF program support and the work of partners across Michigan. Importantly, these accomplishments are not yet reflective of impacts from the new IRA funding investment. With the support of our partners and the roll-out and this funding over the

next several years, we anticipate significant growth in all sectors and metrics of UCF, from trees planted, to jobs created, to citizens engaged and assisted. Much more is yet to come!

In thinking about priorities for our work, past, present, and future, we look to the guidance provided by the state's Forest Action Plan (FAP). 2023 completes the 3rd year of work towards implementing the state's 10 yr. FAP. It is significant to recall that several key goals for the UCF Program were previously achieved during 2022 including:

- Objective 1.1.4:** Increasing Staffing for UCF Program by 1 FTE
- Objective 3.1.3:** Quantify economic benefits of UCF at multiple scales
- Objective 7.1.6:** Renew DNR/MSU PERM Agreement for UCF

During 2023, two stakeholder input sessions were held which helped gather feedback to better prioritize remaining FAP goals for the UCF program. MUCFC is excited to endorse a number of these key priorities for the program in 2024 including:

- work with the DNR to secure ongoing state general funding to support the UCF program;
- use federal UCF and IRA funding to increase the DNR's UCF program staff capacity;
- support the development of a modernized UCF grant management system;
- promote and support the implementation of the DNR's UCF_IRA subgrant program; and
- facilitate events and opportunities to improve engagement between UCF stakeholders and DNR (e.g. Coffee with State Forester, Tree City USA Awards banquet).

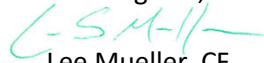
Additionally, the MUCFC is prioritizing several key activities to support the Michigan DNR's UCF program and UCF across the State. These include:

1. An IRA awardee round-table and networking seminar to build capacity and connections;
2. A 2024 Michigan Arbor Day Conference to provide education and awards; and
3. Promotion of upcoming FAP stakeholder engagement opportunities.

So many great things are already happening with partners across the state, and so much more is poised to take off in the coming years. However, nothing will come to fruition without the strong and visible leadership and statewide support of the Michigan DNR. The State's UCF program provides crucial information and coordinating capacity to facilitate and connect projects, partners, and programs across Michigan. The time is now and the excitement is real. Let's work together to secure \$1 million in ongoing state funding commitment to support additional program staff and expand the UCF sub-grant program – necessary investments to ensure the UCF program has the resources necessary to take advantage of this once in a lifetime investment in urban forestry across Michigan.

On behalf of MUCFC, I would like to thank you and the DNR for your dedicated leadership and skillful management in the work to conserve our state's forests and natural resources. With your help we will achieve and exceed many of the goals we have set for the program and our profession in Michigan this next year. I welcome your thoughts and invite further discussion at your convenience.

With regards,



Lee Mueller, CF

Chair, Michigan Urban and Community Forestry Council