

## A Marketing Strategy for Urban & Community Forestry in the West

*Developed by the Western Urban and Community Forestry Committee  
Of the Council of Western State Foresters and the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition*

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### **Purpose of this Marketing Strategy**

The Western Urban and Community Forestry Committee, part of the Council of Western State Foresters (CWSF) and the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC), has developed this strategy to communicate and promote the benefits of Urban and Community Forestry in the 17 western states and Pacific Islands. The purpose of this strategy is to position Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) in the West so that it more clearly resonates with federal, state, and local decision makers who control resources and can influence support for U&CF efforts. The primary users of this strategy are the members and staffs of the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition, such as U&CF coordinators from State Forestry Agencies and the US Forest Service. However, this strategy can be utilized by any organization wishing to promote U&CF activities. The audiences for these strategic actions are community leaders, the media, and program stakeholders who can advocate for more active urban forest management. Through the creation and utilization of key messages, goals, actions, and talking points, we can convey the importance of this work and speak with one western voice on U&CF issues.

### **Background of Western Urban and Community Forestry**

The rapid population growth and urban development that has occurred in the West in the last 20 years makes it imperative that the Western U&CF Committee help build a greater awareness and recognition of, and commitment to, urban and community forest management. Urban sprawl, forest cover loss, invasive species, urban/wildland fire, public health, water quality, air pollution and climate change are just a few of the critically important issues which U&CF positively addresses. Yet the public, the media, and even community decision-makers are often unaware of the strong and beneficial connections between U&CF and these issues.

The forestry agencies in the Western states and Pacific Islands administer U&CF programs that provide technical, financial, and educational assistance to help communities manage their urban forests. State U&CF programs help cities reap the economic, environmental, and social benefits trees provide, and support ecosystem services that add great value to the quality of life in Western communities. Among the U&CF program partners and stakeholders in each state, the importance and value of U&CF is well known and appreciated. But beyond those circles, the benefits gained by creating a healthy and sustainable urban forest is not widely understood or appreciated, and therefore U&CF is under-valued as a mechanism for addressing multiple critical natural resource and societal issues. Due to the expansive rural and forested public lands in the West, U&CF programs have historically taken a backseat to traditional forestry issues. By contrast, the more numerous and much older urban areas in other parts of the US have more history and more visibility with urban forest management. In the West, urban forests and rural forests are often seen as two separate natural systems, rather than being viewed as interconnected parts of the larger landscape. This latter situation has resulted in many missed opportunities to help people understand the need for proper management of trees and forests across the entire landscape. With recent rapid population growth and increased urbanization in the West, U&CF programs are more critical than ever, and are well positioned to serve a more important role.

This document proposes a communications and marketing direction for U&CF that promotes the benefits of this valuable resource, and its management, throughout the West. This strategy is predicated on the belief that a healthy and sustainable urban forest landscape can be part of the solution to many natural resource problems facing the West, and that through greater awareness and understanding of urban forestry, a broader base of support can be built which will result in stronger, more sustainable state and local urban forestry programs.

## Desired Future Outcomes of this Strategy

A coordinated, strategic Western marketing and communications effort will raise the visibility of state and local urban forestry programs and increase the understanding of the impact, value and benefit of U&CF programs. Leaders at all levels of the program will deliver common messages with unified voices. Support will be garnered from stakeholders and decision makers who will advocate for additional investments in urban forestry. People will make the connection between U&CF and other forestry issues, while recognizing the economic, environmental, social, and quality-of-life benefits that urban forestry provides. The result will be healthier communities through more vibrant and sustainable state and local urban forestry programs that produce healthier communities.

## Implementing a Marketing Strategy for Urban & Community Forestry in the West

This strategy is focused on achieving three goals through coordinated actions which include key communication messages, targeted audiences, and detailed talking points. For each of the actions, the key message(s) and talking points should be included, sometimes verbatim. This will create a consistent, strong, and focused Western message. The goals and key messages will guide projects and products undertaken by the Western U&CF Committee, individual state U&CF programs, and regional U&CF staff, and through partnerships with other U&CF stakeholders. While the Western UC&F Committee will help steer this strategy and nurture projects throughout the West, it will be incumbent upon the individual states to carry out programs, policies, and projects that correlate to these strategies, while adding their own complimentary messages.

The most critical target audience addressed in this strategy is elected officials at all levels of government. Next in importance are “messenger audiences”, including the media, and urban forestry program partners such as state urban forest council members, non-profit urban forestry organizations, municipal urban foresters with successful programs, and allied professional organizations. Messenger audiences are those individuals and groups that can help communicate important urban forestry messages on behalf of other agencies, organizations, and coalitions. Secondary audiences include green industry organizations, civic and community groups, businesses and industry, public agencies, and the general public. In order for this strategy to be effective, it must engage these many different audiences and leverage messenger audiences with targeted messages to cultivate urban forestry support.

## Key Messages

These four key messages, conveying specific facets of urban forestry in concise terms, have been developed to support the goals of this strategy:

- 1. Urban forests provide essential benefits we cannot live without.**
- 2. A healthy urban forest doesn't happen by chance – it is the result of proper planning, management, and community investment.**
- 3. Healthy urban forests can help solve many community problems.**
- 4. Urban forests and rural forests are connected; good management of one helps the other.**

The key messages are the “big picture” concepts that remain as a result of more specific strategic marketing efforts. By focusing on **benefits** (message 1), **investments** (message 2), **solutions** (message 3), and **connections** (message 4), people will gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for urban forestry in the West.

**Goals for This Marketing Strategy**

The following three goals are the focus of this strategy:

**Goal 1 - Increase the awareness of and support for urban forestry among policy-makers in the West** – The value of urban forest management is not widely understood, and consequently is not widely supported at funding levels that keep pace with population growth and that are able to dramatically improve the health of Western urban forests. Federal, state and local decision-makers need to understand the importance of state and local urban forestry programs and appreciate the impact federal investments have made in their urban forests. Elected officials need to know that state U&CF programs provide direct benefits to the people they serve, and that a relatively small financial investment produces great dividends.

**Goal 2 - Foster a greater understanding of the importance of urban forests in meeting the economic, environmental, and social needs of communities** – The multiple benefits of U&CF management need to be demonstrated for decision-makers and community leaders. The value-added benefits of the urban forest for such issues as energy savings, storm water run-off, T&E species recovery and air pollution need to be quantified and promoted. The sustainable nature of urban forestry as a way to meet economic, environmental and social needs can be illustrated by promoting ways that trees can be and are being used as cost-saving tools to solve diverse community issues and problems.

**Goal 3 - Engage a diverse set of partners and motivate them to support sustainable urban forestry programs** – Traditional U&CF program partners have limited power to influence U&CF program funding, and other powerful potential partners are not currently engaged or advocating for U&CF. A broad base of constituent groups that support urban forestry and will carry their message of support to all levels of government needs to be created and nurtured in the West. As a coordinated voice for U&CF, they need to effectively reach lawmakers, developers, environmental groups and others with targeted messages about the benefits of U&CF programs.

**Specific Actions in Support of this Marketing Strategy**

The following actions, listed by each of the preceding goals, are the recommended means for successful implementation of this strategy:

**Goal 1 - Increase the awareness of and support for urban forestry among policy-makers in the West**

<u>Action</u>	<u>Key Message(s)</u>	<u>Audience</u>	<u>Talking Points</u>	<u>Collaborators</u>
1.1 - Create and support a coalition of urban forestry partners that can advocate for federal urban forestry funding at present or higher levels, and builds support for a more sustainable funding effort.	1, 2, 3 and 4	Federal Congressional Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Federal funds have had a positive impact on urban forests in the West – and have been a worthwhile investment that has paid dividends.</li> <li>▪ Most Westerners live in urban areas – with urban forests that need active management and investment to maximize their value – just as with rural forests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WUCFC</li> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ UCF Non-Profit Groups</li> <li>▪ Representatives of successful state and local UCF programs</li> <li>▪ Sustainable UF Coalition</li> </ul>

<u>Action</u>	<u>Key Message(s)</u>	<u>Audience</u>	<u>Talking Points</u>	<u>Collaborators</u>
1.2 - Cultivate relationships with Congressional leaders and staff who can influence federal policies and appropriations that benefit urban forests of the West.	1, 2, 3 and 4	Federal Congressional Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decreasing federal funds for urban forestry, coupled with rapid population growth and increasing urbanization, present significant challenges to maintaining sustainable state and local urban forestry programs.</li> <li>▪ Retaining trees in developing communities and increasing canopy cover in Western cities are becoming increasingly more difficult tasks in the face of declining federal funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WUCFC</li> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ UCF Non-Profit Groups</li> <li>▪ Representatives of successful state and local UCF programs</li> <li>▪ Western state UCF councils</li> </ul>

<u>Action</u>	<u>Key Message(s)</u>	<u>Audience</u>	<u>Talking Points</u>	<u>Collaborators</u>
1.3 - Forge a unified U&CF message and consistent promotional strategy West-wide, integrating these key messages with state U&CF communications efforts. Convene a meeting of Western state U&CF Coordinators to share tools, techniques, projects, and strategic perspectives.	1, 2, 3 and 4	State foresters, state urban foresters, WFLC, statewide urban forestry leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Western UCF committee and programs should speak with a common voice on national urban forestry issues, and work to bridge the geographic and institutional barriers that hinder program efficiency.</li> <li>▪ Healthy urban forests are indicators of healthy cities everywhere in the West.</li> <li>▪ Most Westerners live in urban areas – with urban forests that need active management and investment to maximize their value – just as with rural forests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WUCFC</li> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ National Arbor Day Foundation</li> </ul>

<u>Action</u>	<u>Key Message(s)</u>	<u>Audience</u>	<u>Talking Points</u>	<u>Collaborators</u>
1.4 - Create a portfolio of success stories and publicity materials tailored for specific targeted audiences to convey the positive message of U&CF impacts to communities.	1, 2, and 3	Media, public, elected officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Western states U&amp;CF programs have accomplishments worth promoting.</li> <li>▪ Western state UCF programs significantly enhance community health and livability for the West's 60 million urban residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WUCFC</li> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ WFLC Communications</li> </ul>

<u>Action</u>	<u>Key Message(s)</u>	<u>Audience</u>	<u>Talking Points</u>	<u>Collaborators</u>
1.5 - Develop promotional materials that tell the west-wide urban forestry story and highlight individual state success stories in support of policy-maker education efforts.	1, 2, 3 and 4	Federal Congressional Representatives, State Legislators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The west compares favorably to the rest of the country when it comes to urban forestry accomplishments.</li> <li>▪ Trees are more valued in the West because they need care and nurturing to thrive and are a part of our community identities.</li> <li>▪ Western state UCF programs significantly enhance community health and livability for the West's 60 million urban residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WUCFC</li> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ WFLC Communications</li> <li>▪ Western state UCF councils</li> <li>▪ NGOs, Professional Associations, Green Industry partners</li> </ul>

<u>Action</u>	<u>Key Message(s)</u>	<u>Audience</u>	<u>Talking Points</u>	<u>Collaborators</u>
1.6 - Educate state and local decision-makers about the need for and value of investing in urban forestry programs	2 and 3	State and local elected officials and community leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Western state UCF programs significantly enhance community health and livability for the West's 60 million urban residents.</li> <li>▪ States and cities need to invest in the management of urban forests if they expect to reap their benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WUCFC</li> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ WFLC Communications</li> </ul>

<u>Action</u>	<u>Key Message(s)</u>	<u>Audience</u>	<u>Talking Points</u>	<u>Collaborators</u>
1.7 - Match particular interests or priority issues of individual decision-makers with urban forestry oriented solutions	2 and 3	State and local elected officials and community leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Managing urban forests can be one of the more cost-effective solutions to a myriad of community problems and issues, and those can be matched to the interests of specific legislators and community leaders.</li> <li>▪ Using state and local urban forestry programs as mechanisms to solve economic, social, or environmental problems requires an investment of resources that can build enough capacity to address the issues and problems.</li> <li>▪ States and cities need to invest in the management of urban forests if they expect to reap their benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WUCFC</li> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ WFLC Communications</li> <li>▪ Non-profit urban forestry groups</li> </ul>

**Goal 2 - Foster a greater understanding of the importance of urban forests in meeting the economic, environmental, and social needs of communities**

<u>Action</u>	<u>Key Message(s)</u>	<u>Audience</u>	<u>Talking Points</u>	<u>Collaborators</u>
2.1 - Utilize a variety of communication methods that will help decision-makers understand the connection between urban forestry and other pertinent issues facing the west.	1, 3, and 4	Elected and appointed decision-makers at all levels of government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Healthy Urban Forests are vital components of sustainable communities – they provide significant economic, environmental, and social benefits.</li> <li>▪ Urban forestry provides ecosystem services that enhance our environment and make economic sense for communities.</li> <li>▪ For example, developing and displaying energy savings benefits to consumers and local governments achieved through urban forests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WUCFC</li> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ WFLC Communications</li> <li>▪ Western state UCF councils</li> </ul>

<u>Action</u>	<u>Key Message(s)</u>	<u>Audience</u>	<u>Talking Points</u>	<u>Collaborators</u>
2.2 - Help the public make the connection between urban forestry and rural forestry, engaging urban residents in discussions of the benefits of private and public forest management to society.	4	Media, Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Urban and rural forests are intrinsically linked; insects and disease, invasive species, and wildfires cross rural/urban boundaries.</li> <li>▪ People must understand the management of the trees around them before they can be expected to understand complex forest management principles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WUCFC</li> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ WFLC Communications</li> <li>▪ Western state UCF councils</li> <li>▪ U&amp;CF researchers</li> </ul>

<u>Action</u>	<u>Key Message(s)</u>	<u>Audience</u>	<u>Talking Points</u>	<u>Collaborators</u>
2.3 - Create issue-specific communications products, such as fact sheets, brochures, websites, and workshops for community leaders and decision-makers.	1, 2, 3 and 4	Legislators, the Media, the Public, Community Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Urban forest management is a cost-effective tool that communities can use to address a wide variety of environmental issues.</li> <li>▪ Managed urban forests result in healthier air, cleaner water, energy savings, wildlife habitat, and reduce the need for stormwater treatment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WUCFC</li> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ WFLC Communications</li> </ul>

**Goal 3 - Engage a diverse set of partners and motivate them to support sustainable urban forestry programs**

<b><u>Action</u></b>	<b><u>Key Message(s)</u></b>	<b><u>Audience</u></b>	<b><u>Talking Points</u></b>	<b><u>Collaborators</u></b>
3.1 - Develop a resource list of potential partners and key contacts within those organizations and/or industries that will benefit economically and environmentally from partnerships with the UCF program.	1, 2, and 3	State and local urban forestry programs, non-profit organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Successful urban forestry thrives on diverse partnerships.</li> <li>▪ Any organization with a commitment to improving the quality of urban life is a potential partner for state or local urban forestry programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WUCFC</li> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ WFLC Communications</li> </ul>
3.2 - Promote statewide or multi-state projects that increase the visibility of U&CF while engaging diverse partnerships.	1, 2, 3 and 4	Elected and appointed decision-makers at all levels of government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Urban foresters in the West are forging productive partnerships that contribute to improving the health and quality of life in our communities.</li> <li>▪ Urban forestry investments in the West are leveraged for maximum impact.</li> <li>▪ Urban forest management is a cost-effective tool to solve critical community problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WUCFC</li> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ WFLC Communications</li> </ul>
3.3 - Target specific non-green industry groups in the West for outreach, conference presentations, or other education efforts so that they can become greater U&CF advocates.	2 and 3	Community organizations, Community leaders, non-green industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A multi-disciplinary approach to Urban Forestry can meet the objectives of many different community departments and organizations.</li> <li>▪ Trees in cities can help solve community problems, and urban forestry is a concept that can be embraced by broad segments of society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ State UCF Programs</li> <li>▪ Allied Professional Groups</li> </ul>

## **Budget Needs**

The Western U&CF committee will investigate budget needs and diverse funding sources for both short-term and long-range implementation. Some dedicated funding will be needed to fully implement short term goals – for example, to gather the Western coordinators and key stakeholders from each state together for a training session on implementing this strategy (see action 1.3). However, it is imperative that we begin implementing a variety of time-sensitive actions during the next six months within our current fiscal means. Accordingly, State Foresters in the West must be willing to commit the time and energy of their State Urban Forestry Coordinator toward achieving these goals. This may also involve some dedication of each state's funds to getting these key messages out within each state and territory, although these will likely dovetail with pre-existing state efforts.

## **Evaluation and Monitoring**

This marketing strategy is designed to be a living document that will be updated periodically. It will guide many of the efforts of the Western U&CF committee for the next several years. The committee must make it a priority to monitor and evaluate its success at implementing this strategy during its meetings. Performance measures should be developed to evaluate the progress towards each goal. The committee will provide updates to the WFLC Board and the CWSF at appropriate intervals.

## **Conclusion**

Based on measures of impact and efficiency, state U&CF programs in the West are some of the most cost-effectively spent government dollars dedicated to natural resource management. Yet as any state U&CF coordinator will testify, current efforts only scratch the surface of what could be accomplished in this area. Population growth in the West shows no sign of abating, and urbanization continues to occur at an accelerated pace. The West is becoming more urban, not more rural, yet the attention devoted to and financial support for rural forestry issues dwarfs urban forestry many times over. The Western U&CF Committee believes these trends can be addressed by a new strategy that raises the profile and increases understanding of urban forestry in the West, provides stronger connections to rural issues, and demonstrates how urban and community forests solve critical natural resource and community problems.

## **For More Information**

For additional information on this strategy, please contact one of the following individuals who participated in writing it:

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