

# California Trees

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the 2004 California  
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Empowering grassroots efforts  
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partnerships that preserve,  
protect, and enhance California's  
urban and community forests.

## Protecting Oaks in San Luis Obispo County: Model Effort or Red Flag?

By Jane Braxton Little

In San Luis Obispo County there is no serious debate about whether to preserve oaks. The vast majority of the county's 240,000 residents agree the native trees adorning the valleys and hillsides should be preserved as part of the natural and cultural landscape.

How to do that, however, has generated a decade of controversy that promises to erupt in the next few months.

The San Luis Obispo County Oak Protection Committee is developing an ordinance that would mandate protections for oak trees and impose strict penalties on violators. The group hopes to collect 8,100 signatures in time to place the measure

before countywide voters on the November ballot, says Pam Marshal Heatherington, executive director of the Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo (ECO SLO), one of the ordinance backers.

"The chance is there to do this right and keep everyone at the table," she says.

That's not likely with a mandatory ordinance, says Jackie Crabb, executive director of the San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau and a member of the Native Tree Committee of San



*Nearly half of California's oak woodlands are on private land such as this cattle ranch near Avila Beach in San Luis Obispo County.*

Photo: Mark Souder, San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau

Luis Obispo County, which supports voluntary protections for oaks. Ranchers and other landowners, who likewise support the voluntary approach, view the proposed regulations as a threat to their ability to make a living.

"It's imposing one layer of bureaucracy on top of another. When do you stop? And how effective is it?" Crabb says.

Despite a general commitment to protecting oaks, this coastal California county is increasingly at odds over the means to that

*(continued on page 2)*



Empowering grassroots efforts and building strategic partnerships that preserve, protect, and enhance California's urban and community forests.

California ReLeaf is a program of the National Tree Trust, a nonprofit organization that promotes healthy communities by providing resources that educate and empower people to grow and care for urban and community forests.

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Oaks (continued from page 1)

end. The polarization here reflects frustration statewide over the failure to control the destruction of native oaks, a keystone species and California icon. Blue, valley, and live oaks alike are vanishing at the alarming rate of more than 14,000 acres a year, says Janet Santos Cobb, president of the California Oak Foundation.

Nearly half of the 11 million acres now graced with oak groves are under private ownership, where the trees are most vulnerable, she says.

Vintners who plant grape vines have bulldozed thousands of trees without penalty by relying on state environmental regulations that exempt land conversions from one agricultural use to another. Developers hide behind the same regulations, mowing down oaks under the guise of agricultural conversions and then applying for development permits on the treeless land.

In San Luis Obispo County, the rush for rural ranchettes is particularly destructive. The area is one of the most desirable places on earth, says Rick Hawley, executive director of Greenspace: The Cambria Land Trust.

"Everyone in the world wants to live here."

Oaks still cover around 36 percent of the county, but they are a remnant of the vast stands that once blanketed the coastal hills. In the century that followed statehood, ranchers and developers removed 70 percent of the valley



oaks growing in the Salinas River Valley. Today there are few valley oaks left between five and 100 years old.

Blue oaks, generally found in the drier hills, suffered historically from sheep and cattle grazing. Today it is vineyards and rural subdivisions that are destroying them.

**Past Ordinance Efforts**

Concerned citizens became so anxious about these losses that the Board of Supervisors in the mid-1990s formed a task force to address the issue. Ranchers, environmentalists, native tree advocates, and county officials worked together for months to craft an ordinance that would protect the trees they all valued.

Their goal was to develop regulations that would eliminate loop holes but provide enough flexibility to allow landowners to manage their land. That's a delicate dance, says Steve Sinton, a rancher and former water attorney. He says he was committed to an ordinance because he questioned "whether you can get people to do the right thing."

The task force looked at rules adopted by other counties. They listened to the arguments of those who wanted as little regulation as possible and those who wanted maximum protection for oaks. But they could not fig-



ure out how to allow one landowner to cut a tree to build a road and still prevent destruction of a 500-year-old tree.

"I had an open mind and I couldn't get there," Sinton says.

In 1997 the Board of Supervisors abandoned the ordinance approach and adopted voluntary guidelines in a Native Tree Resolution. The Native Tree Committee was formed in 1998 to encourage oak woodland protection and enhancement through landowner education and outreach programs.

Since then they have planted nearly 6,500 seedlings, says Dick Montague; a life-long rancher and current committee chair. He and other ranchers take the acorns they gather to high school students, who germinate them and tend the seedlings in greenhouses. The young trees are then distributed to local landowners, who plant them on their property.

To expand its mission, the Native Tree Committee began working with county planners on a countywide Oak Woodland Management Plan, which the Board of Supervisors adopted in April 2004. The plan reviews the status of the county's oak trees, their economic, natural resource, and aesthetic value. It emphasizes the

challenge of conserving the county's existing oak woodlands and of enhancing those woodlands impacted by past activities.

A key element of the management plan is that it is voluntary "and shall in no way be binding by law on the private landowner or abridge the private property rights of a landowner."

San Luis Obispo's oak management plan is the first such plan to be adopted by any jurisdiction in the state since passage of the 2001 California Oak Woodlands Conservation Act.

This act, administered by the Wildlife Conservation Board, makes \$10 million available for public education and outreach, oak restoration or protection through conservation easements. With its oak woodlands management plan in place, San Luis Obispo County is now eligible to apply for funding.

"Oaks need a little help," says Montague. "All of our woods have changed. We're just trying to protect our dwindling population by promoting greater awareness."

Oaks in San Luis Obispo County do need help, agrees Cobb, the Oak Foundation president, but the new management plan will not

*(continued on page 4)*

OPPOSITE PAGE: *While proponents of oak protection debate the effectiveness of voluntary versus mandatory regulations, bulldozers plow full steam ahead through San Luis Obispo County's remaining oak woodlands.*

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## 2004 Urban Forest Conference

"The Changing Landscape of Urban Forestry" is the theme of the **2004 California Urban Forest Conference**, taking place September 19, 20, and 21 in Rohnert Park. Co-sponsored by the California Urban Forests Council (CaUFC) and California ReLeaf, the conference will include sessions on implementing sustainable landscape concepts, funding mechanisms for urban forestry programs, fire in California, and the rise and fall of urban tree species. The program kicks off with an opening reception the evening of September 19 and ends on September 21 with an afternoon tour of sustainably managed vineyards in the beautiful, oak-studded Sonoma wine country.

Register online at CaUFC's website, [www.caufc.org](http://www.caufc.org). Nonprofit and volunteer-based urban forestry groups receive a significant discount on registration. For more information, visit the website or contact CaUFC at (707) 524-1193, [info@caufc.org](mailto:info@caufc.org).

**Attention California ReLeaf Network members:** The 2004 California ReLeaf Network Retreat will take place on September 19 as a pre-event to the Urban Forest Conference. The retreat is free and includes a travel stipend. In addition, as a representative of a community-based urban forestry group, you will receive a deep discount on your registration at the Urban Forest Conference. Don't miss this rare, low-cost opportunity to network with fellow urban forest advocates! Register for the retreat and conference online at [www.caufc.org](http://www.caufc.org). California ReLeaf will send additional retreat information soon, so be on the lookout and make sure to mark your calendar!

Oaks (continued from page 3)

provide it. Instead of offering protections beyond the county's voluntary guidelines, it merely reiterates existing policies, she says.

"Surely elected officials and staff can do better than this... to keep faith with the voting public they serve," Cobb says.

**Ballot Measure Effort**

To ensure that they do, the San Luis Obispo County Oak Protection Committee plans to bypass the Board of Supervisors and go directly to county voters with a ballot initiative imposing mandatory regulations on all landowners. A survey the committee conducted last year has convinced them that they are on the right track, says Heatherington, the Environmental Center director.

Devised by a psychology professor at California Polytechnic State University, the survey found 76 percent support for adoption of a native oak protection ordinance. Although half of the 271 respondents said some oak tree removal should be allowed without penalty, a

majority said native oaks should be protected by requiring a permit for removal and requiring mitigation measures for oak tree removal.

The survey has become a lightning rod in the controversy over oak protections. Members of the Native Tree Committee question its accuracy. The sampling, which included 2,000 randomly selected names taken from voter registration rolls, may not have been valid, says Crabb, the Farm Bureau director.

"You can do a lot with numbers. Is this a true reflection of what the public wants? We question that," Crabb says.

Even if voters approve an oak protection ordinance, she and other members of the committee wonder how it will be funded and who will enforce it. In neighboring Santa Barbara County, a 2002 tree ordinance requires every oak tree removed to be replaced with up to 15 seedlings. The activities with the greatest impact on oaks require an even more stringent management plan permit. The supervisors included a provision for an oak tree specialist to enforce

Photo: Mark Souder, San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau



**"No one can afford to have a cop behind every tree."**



Photo: Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association, Long Beach

**Trees In Business Districts: Why Such a Tough Sell?**

By Mike Bowen

In a landmark 1998 study, researcher Kathleen Wolf from the University of Washington's Center for Urban Horticulture, showed photographs of five business district planting scenarios to consumers and business owners in Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Washington, D.C. The scenes ranged from barren streetscapes devoid of foliage to tree-studded boulevards. Among Wolf's findings: Consumers are willing to pay an average of 12 percent more for products from stores in tree-lined districts and more for shaded parking.

So why does it seem that tree advocates must go to such great lengths to interest business owners in planting trees? Perhaps it's because shop owners see—on their front steps—the down side of trees: leaf litter, bird droppings, branches that block signage, roots pushing up the sidewalk, pine cones that fall and dent car hoods in the parking lot. Bob Chavez, parks director for the City of Whittier, has heard the complaints so often they crystallize into a single mantra: "That stupid tree!"

Chavez, whose department is in charge of plantings for new construction in commercial areas,

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the regulations.

To date, however, no one has been hired, says Alex Tuttle, a Santa Barbara County planner. Mainly because of budget constraints, the enforcement position and other parts of the ordinance are paper commitments that have yet to be tested, he says.

Limited funds may also affect other municipalities seeking to implement strict protections for oak trees, says Bill Tietje, director of the Central Coast Integrated Hardwood Range Management Program. "No one can afford to have a cop behind every tree," he says.

If the survey fanned the controversy, the ballot measure promises to ignite a full-fledged fire. Despite their shared commitment to protecting oaks, neither the Native Tree Committee, which favors voluntary measures, nor the Oak Protection Committee, which is promoting the ordinance, is optimistic about success using the other's methods.

"When a group is so intent that an ordinance is the solution to everything, you have to ask why," replies Crabb.

Counters Heatherington, "We have enough instances that voluntary measures don't work. There are just too many people who are irresponsible."

Hawley, the Greenspace director, calls their disagreements a clash of cultures: the ranchers and their traditional stewardship of the land versus environmentalists unwilling to risk the oaks that remain. Although Greenspace co-sponsored the survey and backs mandatory regulations, Hawley has taken the position of a liaison. He hopes to bring the two committees together.

If he can establish some common ground, it may slow the assault oaks are suffering in San Luis Obispo County. That, in turn, could help other groups throughout the state create their own protection processes. "It doesn't help the resources any if we're always fighting," Hawley says.

His efforts to bring about consensus could determine whether San Luis Obispo County will serve as a model for the rest of the state or a red flag. Far more is at stake than any one group's victory over the other. While they are squabbling, oaks continue to die—in mass removals and one tree at a time.

*Jane Braxton Little is a freelance journalist based in Plumas County, California.*

#### YOU CAN CONTACT

**San Luis Obispo County  
Oak Protection Committee**  
Pamela Marshal Heatherington  
(805) 544-1777  
pam@ecoslo.org

**Native Tree Committee of  
San Luis Obispo County**  
Dick Montague, Chairman  
(805) 238-0653

**Greenspace: The Cambria  
Land Trust**  
Rick Hawley, Executive Director  
(805) 927-2866  
rick@greenspacecambria.org

## Tip from the Field: Folding Platform Ladder

Ellyn Shea, tree care manager for San Francisco's Friends of the Urban Forest, finds this handy folding footladder an indispensable tool for tree maintenance. She found it online at Comfort House, [www.comforthouse.com](http://www.comforthouse.com) (search for "platform ladder"). The price varies depending on the model—

from \$65 to \$92, plus shipping—as does the weight and holding capacity.



Photos: Martha Ozonoff



**Trees and Businesses** (continued from page 4)

counters such negative opinions by informing property owners that they can save money with trees: Shade in the parking lot lengthens the lifespan of the pavement. He also advises landscape architects on which trees to plant to maximize efficiency and minimize hazards.

**Initial Approach**

Jennifer Scott-Lifland, a certified arborist and tree care manager with Los Angeles-based TreePeople, likes to approach business owners through their peers. “If you have a merchants’ association (to work through), you’re really in luck,” Scott-Lifland says. And preferably a merchants’ or business district association that’s already sympathetic to the idea of planting trees.

Scott-Lifland says both residential and business district tree projects generally start when someone connected with the project area contacts TreePeople. Often, it’s someone who’s taken the organization’s Citizen Forester volunteer training course. Scott-Lifland adds that it’s best when a local business owner becomes an “ambassador” for a project—encouraging fellow business owners to keep up with watering and maintenance commitments.

Property owners interested in planting trees through TreePeople must sign two City of Los Angeles forms, Scott-Lifland says. One form gives permission to plant the trees on the owner’s property. The second form commits the property owner to maintaining the newly planted trees.

Even with a signed commitment for maintenance, Scott-Lifland keeps in touch with volunteer tree project leaders and visits newly planted areas once a year. When necessary, she sets up a tree-care event, with deep watering, mulching, weeding, and trash removal around the trees. She draws gardeners and other committed participants aside for tips on pruning. The tree-care event does more than provide needed maintenance. “It reinvigorates the local community to the project,”

Scott-Lifland says.

**Addressing Concerns**

Blocking business signage is a major sticking point for shop owners and can be an obstacle to tree projects. That’s why the Trees for El Camino Project, a nonprofit organization working to plant trees along a 4.3-mile stretch of El Camino Real in Palo Alto, worked with city officials to relax the city’s sign ordinance along the project route. Now, business owners can adjust their signage as the newly planted trees—and their branches—grow.

“That made a lot of difference,” says Paula Sandas, former development director for the group. Trees for El Camino raised \$250,000 from public, private, and foundation sources to plant 250 trees. The final 180 trees will be installed along the boulevard this fall.

Dena Kirtley, owner of Treescience, an arboriculture consulting firm in West Sacramento, suggests that giving business owners a choice of which trees to plant—from a group of suitable species—reinforces buy-in to the project. Kirtley also cites the experience of the Urban Tree Foundation in Visalia as a successful “hands-off” approach to business district tree projects. Over the past three years, Brian Kempf, the foundation’s executive director, has used grant-subsidized labor from the nonprofit Tulare County Youth Corps to help plant and maintain 1,500 trees in downtown Visalia. After an initial sales pitch to get business owners to support the plantings nearby, they need to do little but watch the trees grow. “They love it,” Kempf says of local business owners.

It’s important to remember that “business owners and managers deal with the realities of tree costs,” Kathy Wolf points out in the Center for Urban Horticulture fact sheet entitled “Growing



Photo: Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association, Long Beach

with Green: Business Districts and the Urban Forest.” According to Wolf, business owners tend to understand parking, sanitation, security, and marketing issues fairly well. “They often don’t take the same approach with trees and landscaping,” she says. “These things have to be managed, too.” Knowing the costs and benefits of trees can help businesses make better decisions about planning, planting, and maintenance. And staying responsive to the concerns and interests of business owners can help tree advocates make the case for more trees. ■

*Mike Bowen is a freelance journalist based in Visalia, California.*



Photo: TreePeople

#### RESOURCES:

**The Center for Urban Horticulture**, in the University of Washington’s College of Forest Resources, has an excellent collection of fact sheets and studies on a host of urban forest and urban greening topics, including the benefits of trees in business districts: <http://www.cfr.washington.edu/research.envmind/>

**The Center for Urban Forest Research** conducts studies and develops tools that help demonstrate new ways that trees add value to communities, converting results into financial terms to stimulate more investment in trees: <http://cufr.ucdavis.edu/>

“**Training Young Trees for Structure and Form**,” a video available through the International Society of Arboriculture, is an excellent resource for training tree care volunteers ([www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com); \$25 ISA members, \$32 general public).



#### Funding News

This spring, California ReLeaf awarded grants to forty-five community groups through the **2004 California ReLeaf Urban Forestry Grant Program**. Individual grants ranged from \$1,800 to \$7,500 in three funding categories: 1. Education, Outreach, and Volunteer Development; 2. Tree Care Programs; and 3. Tree Planting Activities. A total of \$279,332 was awarded.

The grant recipients are undertaking a variety of projects including translating the text of educational tree pamphlets into Spanish, conducting hands-on tree care programs focused on pruning young trees, and planting trees in parks and other public places.

The California ReLeaf Urban Forestry Grant Program is funded through a contract with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. For information on future funding for urban forestry projects, contact Grant Coordinator Elisabeth Hoskins at (949) 642-0127 or email [ehoskins@nationaltreetrust.org](mailto:ehoskins@nationaltreetrust.org).

Many thanks to **PG&E's SafeTree program** for a generous grant of \$75,000 to California ReLeaf for support of the California ReLeaf Network.

# California ReLeaf Network Member Profile: Seal Beach Tree Committee and Trees for Seal Beach

By Michael Tanner

Photos both pages: Elisabeth Hoskins



City Hall sports signature palms.

Against the backdrop of coastal southern California's sun-drenched concrete and palm trees, a partnership of two community-based tree groups and the City of Seal Beach wage a struggle to shade the town. According to Jan Stilwell of the Seal Beach Tree Committee, the bare trunks of the city's ubiquitous palms offer all the shade and comfort of "walking by a giraffe." Still, this hasn't deterred her and her colleagues on the city-affiliated committee and its sister nonprofit, *Trees for Seal Beach*, in pursuing their vision of a verdant canopy for their town.

## Paving the Way

Inspired partly by Tree Committee cofounder Jim Caviola's trials and tribulations with local bureaucracy as he attempted to plant trees in front of his own house in 1997, the Tree Committee has effectively become the city's overseer of citizen plantings, as well as an advocate for its urban forest. Caviola founded *Trees for Seal Beach* in 2001 as an independent nonprofit foundation to raise money for some of the projects the committee had envisioned but had been unable to fund.

One of the committee's first challenges—and most visible successes—came with the city's plan in 1997 to remove all the mature ficus trees from three blocks of Main Street. The trees' roots were interfering with the sidewalk, and in one case, had even grown into a store. The committee's solution—to trim the roots and replace the sidewalk around the trees with 6-by-8-inch red-brick paving blocks laid directly on sand—not only saved 25 to 30 threatened trees, but made way for the planting of 18 additional trees to fill in gaps where a ficus had been missing. The paving blocks, which allow water to reach the roots and promote bio-filtration, actually improve the look of the sidewalk to Stilwell's eyes, while being easily lifted up and replaced when root trimming become necessary.

The city's original solution is indicative of what Caviola calls the local government's tendency to "protect the sidewalk." Or what committee member Mario Voce sees as a matter of money and perception. "Municipalities these days are strapped," he says, and since residents tend to view foliage largely as the stuff that blocks their signs or falls on their cars, it's important that the Tree Committee represents the interests of the urban forest. "Otherwise," he laments, "city staff is under a lot of pressure to let trees go."

## Filling in the Gaps

Finding proper trees for this beachside town can be challenging. The coastal weather, view concerns, and the narrow spaces that most plantings are forced into between street and sidewalk limit the variety of species that can thrive in Seal Beach. But Voce says the committee is "trying to educate away



Committee member Jan Stilwell points out the brick pavers that helped save ficus on Main Street from removal.

### Member Snapshot

#### Seal Beach Tree Committee

Year founded: 1996  
Joined Network: 1997  
Committee Members: 4  
Contact:  
Jan Stilwell, Member  
Seal Beach Tree Committee  
1005 Driftwood Avenue  
Seal Beach, CA 90740  
(562) 493-3828

#### Trees for Seal Beach

Year founded: 2001  
Joined Network: 2001  
Board Members: 5  
Contact:  
Jim Caviola, President  
Trees for Seal Beach  
1117 Ocean Ave.  
Seal Beach, CA 90740  
(714) 235-0880





Narrow planting strips pose a challenge for species selection.

from palm trees" and promote the idea that "if you combine palms with other canopy trees, you get a pretty mix." To that end, one of the Tree Committee's main functions is establishing a list of appropriate trees for the city and providing guidance on planting the right tree in the right place.

The city works with the committee and Trees for Seal Beach in seeking grant money for projects and helps facilitates plantings by granting permits and removing concrete. According to city engineer Mark Vukojevic, the city is currently working with both groups to create a map of the town's entire tree inventory and the vacancies within it.

The number of tree vacancies has been visibly dropping through the years as the two groups have tackled projects such as planting in the 1,500-foot median along Seal Beach Boulevard, greening an 8-foot-high sound wall along Pacific Coast Highway, and planting trees to form a screen around two downtown parking lots.

Funding has come from State grants and California ReLeaf grants, and contributions from Trees for Seal Beach board members and other citizens. In addition, Caviola's group has thrown two beach parties complete with surf music and swing bands, and a huge tent on the sand filled with trees. Last year's party attracted 650 revelers and brought in \$40,000 to support the group's plantings.

### A System for Greening

More than the trees the two groups have put in the ground, more than the tons of concrete they have removed, more than the showcase projects on Main Street and Seal Beach Boulevard, tree committee member Voce says he is proudest of the system that the groups have put in place for cit-

izens to continue to beautify the city. Rather than a jumble of residents' individual tree planting requests, there's an integrated vision for the city's urban forest and two groups working together to keep the ball rolling.

*Michael Tanner is a freelance writer based in San Francisco, California.*



The lucky ficus that got to stay on Main Street.

## Network Members

Formed in 1991, the California ReLeaf Network is a statewide alliance of community-based organizations that share the common goals of planting and protecting trees, fostering an ethic of environmental stewardship, and promoting citizen involvement.

### Northern California

- Atherton Tree Committee
- Auburn Area Urban Forestry Group
- California Oak Foundation
- California Urban Forests Council
- Canopy: Trees for Palo Alto
- CREEC
- CityTrees
- Fair Oaks Beautification Association
- Friends of Carmel Forest
- Friends of El Cerrito Trees
- Friends of the Urban Forest
- Magic
- Marin ReLeaf
- Mendocino County ReLeaf
- National AIDS Memorial Grove
- North Hills Landscape Committee
- Oak Habitat Restoration Project
- Oakland ReLeaf
- Our City Forest
- Patrick's Point Garden Club
- Petaluma Tree Planters
- Roseville Urban Forest Foundation
- Sacramento Tree Foundation
- San Mateo Park Association
- South San Francisco Beautification Committee
- Stewards of Slavianka
- Streaminders
- TREE Davis
- Vacaville Tree Foundation
- Vallemar Conservators
- Woodland Tree Foundation

### Central California

- Atascadero Native Tree Association
- Goleta Valley Beautiful
- Greenspace: The Cambria Land Trust
- Ojai Valley ReLeaf

- Santa Barbara Beautiful
- Santa Barbara County ReLeaf
- Santa Margarita Community Forestry
- Tree Foundation of Kern
- Tree Fresno
- Trees for Cayucos
- Tule River Parkway Association
- Urban Tree Foundation
- Visalia Beautification Committee
- WildPlaces

### Southern California

- Arroyo Seco Foundation
- Community ReLeaf
- Coronado Street Tree Committee
- Desert Hot Springs Tree Advisory Board
- Fallbrook Land Conservancy
- Hollywood Beautification Team
- Huntington Beach Tree Society
- Ivey Ranch Park Association
- Keep Riverside Clean & Beautiful
- L.A. Community Forest Advisory Committee
- Mountains Restoration Trust
- North East Trees
- Orange for Trees
- Pasadena Beautiful Foundation
- People for Trees
- Professional Tree Care Association of San Diego
- ReLeaf Costa Mesa
- San Diego Community Forest Advisory Board
- Seal Beach Tree Committee
- ShadeTree Partnership
- Tree Musketeers
- TreePeople
- Trees for Seal Beach
- Victoria Avenue Forever
- West Hollywood Tree Preservation Society

If you would like to reach any of the groups listed, or you are with a group that would like information on membership in the California ReLeaf Network, contact California ReLeaf: (530) 757-7333; careleaf@nationaltreetrust.org



## Report from Washington: Forestry Facing Cuts

### U&CF Reduction

The President's budget was released in February and has been undergoing revisions by Congress this spring. The Urban and Community Forestry program (U&CF) would be cut by approximately 8 percent under the current proposal, to provide a total of about \$32 million nationally in support of technical and financial assistance for urban forests. This would be the third year in a row of funding reduction.

The U&CF program is delivered through state agencies to provide technical and financial assistance to communities in support of urban forests. In California, the program is delivered through a large network of partners working with the state department of forestry, including California ReLeaf and the California Urban Forests Council.

While California doesn't rely on the federal program for all its funding support, the federal program is critical, especially now that the state budget is under pressure. Early summer is a key time to alert the entire California Congressional delegation about your concerns. While this is a tight budget year, we believe that a \$50 million investment in our nation's urban forests is a sound investment toward protecting and sustaining this \$400 billion national environmental asset.

### Fire Funding

Of particular interest to Californians are the various forms of support for fire suppression and fire fighting provided by the USDA Forest Service. The Healthy Forests Restoration Act funded a number of approaches to reducing fire risk. State agencies have asked Congress to reconsider the President's budget to fund the following activities: \$28 million for Cooperative Fire Protection and \$51 million for Wildland Fire Management. There has also been an interest from rural forestry advocates in increasing the amount of money available for on-the-ground restoration of fire damaged landscapes.

### Research at Risk

The Forest Service has also supported urban forestry through the approximately \$3.6 million it has invested nationally in urban forest

research—which has provided incredible 'bang for the buck'. A prime example is the Center for Urban Forest Research at the Pacific Southwest Research Station in Davis. The President's budget for FY 05 for the Davis center is \$600,000, an amount roughly level with previous years. While the federal budget is tight this year, the Davis station's research on water resources and urban-wildland fire issues couldn't be more pressing as the country enters another tough fire season. Increasing total funding for urban forest research nationally by \$2.4 million would allow the Davis station to double its efforts around these critical issues and provide enhancements to the two other key urban forest research stations at Chicago and Syracuse. It would also help the Davis station continue its technology transfer program dedicated to translating research results into plain language, a function that is currently at risk of being cut due to budget concerns.

### Contact Elected Officials

To contact your local elected officials about these issues, a personal letter and phone call are still the best forms of communication. Fax your Representative and Senators a copy of your letter. Specify the program you are supporting, the department and agency that program is located in, and the amount of funding you believe is necessary. Provide local examples of federal programs at work in your district and the ways that support was leveraged to achieve real benefits for citizens. Together, advocates for urban forestry can raise awareness and support for the state and federal programs that are so important to the health of community forests nationwide. Now is the time to act! For more information on federal funding for urban and community forests, contact the National Alliance for Community Trees. ■

*By Alice Ewen Walker, executive director of the National Alliance for Community Trees*

This report was brought to you by the **National Alliance for Community Trees** (ACT), a national network of nonprofit urban forestry and community greening groups.

Membership information is available online at [www.actrees.org](http://www.actrees.org), or by calling (301) 699-8635 or emailing [alice@pobox.com](mailto:alice@pobox.com).



Photo: Martha Ozonoff

## **Volunteerism Debate Continues: Your Action Needed!**

Months after the Department of Industrial Relations fined a Redding-based nonprofit more than \$33,000 for using volunteers on a publicly funded restoration project, the debate over how to resolve the issue of volunteerism as it pertains to prevailing wage law has hit the urban forestry community hard.

Multiple California ReLeaf Network groups have chosen to suspend projects utilizing public funds, with others receiving notification from local government partners that their projects will not move forward until the issue is resolved.

California ReLeaf is working with other statewide nonprofits on a coordinated grassroots campaign that asks Governor Schwarzenegger to swiftly solve this problem through an administrative fix or support for legislation that would provide an exemption for California's conservation community.

California ReLeaf contributed a fact sheet on this issue to a report compiled and submitted to the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism (GOSERV) summarizing more than twenty conservation projects and programs that have been or could be affected by this law, including projects funded through the California ReLeaf Urban Forestry Grant Program.

The programs and projects of the urban forestry community will be dramatically impacted unless this issue is resolved quickly. For more information on how you can help, contact Martha Ozonoff at California ReLeaf, (530) 757-7333.

## **EEMP Funds Released for Urban Forestry Projects**

Governor Schwarzenegger's Department of Finance has released \$5 million in resource conservation grants that were approved in the 2003-2004 State Budget for the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program.

California ReLeaf Network groups participated in a grassroots strategy with several other nonprofits and local agencies earlier this year to overcome the Governor's proposed reversion of this funding. The 2003-2004 EEMP provides grants to almost twenty resource conservation projects including urban forestry projects sponsored by North East Trees and Our City Forest.

Special thanks go to Assembly Member Christine Kehoe (D-San Diego) and the Trust for Public Land for spearheading the effort to restore these critical conservation funds.

## **Urban Forestry Dollars Proposed in Governor's Budget**

A series of letters released by the Department of Finance to the Legislature earlier this month reflect the likely changes to appear in the Governor's May Revision of his proposed 2004-2005 State Budget, including adjustments to resource allocations for the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Most important among these adjustments is the inclusion of \$1.175 million for urban forestry through Proposition 12. This would continue the cycle of park bond funding for urban forestry developed under the Davis Administration, though there is no indication that any of the \$10 million under Proposition 40 will be allocated this year.

The State Legislature must still address the issue of resource bond allocations in the 2004-2005 State Budget and include these funding provisions in the budget bills that will be debated over the next two months.

*By Martha Ozonoff*

For more information  
on pending legislation,  
go to:

[www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov)





# California ReLeaf Network Corner

## California ReLeaf Welcomes Two New Groups to the Network!

### About California Trees

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Photo: Sulpiziana Park

Friends of Carmel Forest works with the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea Forest and Beach Commission, city staff, and others to enhance and perpetuate Carmel's forest environment. Founded in 1990 as an official support group for the city, the nonprofit organization has helped grow and distribute native pine seedlings to area residents for planting on public and private property; created a self-



Photo: Friends of Carmel Forest

guided walking tour of the town's heritage trees; introduced tree planting and care information into middle- and grade-school classrooms; participated in two city-wide bark beetle surveys; and has a regular "Forest Facts" column in the town's weekly paper, the *Carmel Pine Cone*. Contact the group at (831) 624-3208.



**WildPlaces Ecological Restoration and Education** was founded in 2001 to preserve, restore, and protect California's wild and rural places and the peoples who are part of these native landscapes through volunteer-driven habitat restoration, environmental and cultural education, political advocacy, and career development. Current projects include the collection and propagation of giant sequoia seeds for replanting in the Giant Sequoia National Monument next spring; oak woodland and wildlife habitat restoration on private ranchland near Springville, California; and riparian rehabilitation on the south fork of the Kern River. Learn more about the group online at [www.wildplaces.net](http://www.wildplaces.net).



Photo: Elisabeth Hoskins



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## Trees in Small City Business Districts: Comparing Resident and Visitor Response

Do people prefer to shop in places having tree-lined streets? Scientific studies about trees and business districts answer this question with a resounding "yes!" One study focused on smaller cities (10-20,000 population). Fourteen cities with downtown business districts were selected throughout the United States. Surveys were sent to residents, the most likely shoppers in the districts. Surveys were also sent to potential visitors in nearby larger cities (100,000 population or more). Both groups favored trees in retail streetscapes. The urban forest is an important amenity that provides curb appeal, and attracts visitors and shoppers to downtown business districts.

### Public Preferences

Preference surveys are used to assess public values for various landscapes. In this study people rated 30 scenes using the scale of 1 =not at all to 5=like very much. Ratings are not just aesthetic reactions; they reflect a person's complex understandings and assumptions about a place. Judgments of high visual quality are often linked to behavior. Preference ratings provide information for planning and managing more shopper-friendly places.



Overall  
Highest  
Rated  
Scene  
4.23



Highest  
Rated  
Street  
Scene  
3.85



Lowest  
Rated  
Scene  
1.51

**LOW AND HIGH RATINGS** — Image ratings were averaged. Scenes with the lowest and highest mean ratings differ quite a bit. Pedestrian-oriented pocket parks were most highly rated. These small landscaped spaces provide a quiet moment while in the city. When comparing street scenes, higher preference was expressed for trees that are large and enclose the street. There is a full two point difference between streets with and without trees. Archi-

ecture and parking are similar for all images, so probably have little effect on the ratings.

Consistent with other landscape research, the presence of trees enhances public preferences. In this study people enjoy having trees in small parks within business districts, and in the overall street environment.



**Category 1:  
Pocket Parks**  
overall mean: 3.72

resident: 3.76  
visitor: 3.69



**Category 2:  
Full Street Canopy**  
overall mean: 3.63

resident: 3.58  
visitor: 3.66



**Category 3:  
Enclosed Sidewalk**  
overall mean: 3.32

resident: 3.28  
visitor: 3.33



**Category 4:  
Intermittent Trees**  
overall mean: 2.78

resident: 2.96  
visitor: 2.61  
(significantly different)



**Category 5:  
No Trees**  
overall mean: 1.65

resident: 1.69  
visitor: 1.60

**Public preferences for business districts increase with the presence of more and larger trees!**

**The same results are found in studies of both small and big city business districts.**

## Visual Categories

Statistics can be used to extract image categories based on ratings patterns. Five visual categories were identified. Mean (or average) ratings and standard deviations were calculated for each, and t-Tests were used for comparisons ( $p < .01$ ). Here are the results.

**CATEGORY PREFERENCES** —The most highly preferred category was *Pocket Parks*. A person has views of surrounding buildings and streets while in these tiny parks, but is removed from the busyness of the street and sidewalk. Small green spaces provide moments of rest that allow the district user to regroup and then continue with his or her visit in the district.

Looking across the categories of street scenes, ratings increase steadily with the presence of trees. Category 5, *No Trees*, is rated distinctly lower than all other categories and contains no sign of vegetation within a block of well-maintained buildings. Category 4, *Intermittent Trees*, has a higher rating though the trees are a minor visual element. Vegetation is visible, but is less prominent when compared to paving and buildings. Categories 2 and 3 are streetscapes where trees are larger and define the space at the street level. Trees provide a physical and visual separation from the street for a pedestrian.

### RESIDENT AND VISITOR DIFFERENCES

Business districts that have large trees are most preferred by both small and large city residents. Differences in response for the two groups were found only on *Intermittent Trees*. Potential visitors and tourists from large cities rated these street scenes lower.

## Retail & Tree Management

Consumers enjoy having trees in shopping districts, and are willing to spend more where trees are present! Small trees provide some amenities, but are less preferred. Small street trees are being selected for planting in many cities, due to sign visibility and maintenance issues. But the mature canopy of small trees directly screens shop windows and signs. Larger trees can be pruned to enhance visibility, and are more preferred by the people whose purchases support merchants.



### Research Funding:

USDA Forest Service on recommendation of National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council



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