

California Trees

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



Photo: L.A. Conservation Corps

Urban Forestry Takes Root in the Green Jobs Movement

By Crystal Ross O'Hara

When President-Elect Obama, still weeks away from his inauguration, discussed components of what would ultimately become the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, he announced that creating a clean energy economy would be a key element in the plan.

“(We) will put Americans to work in new jobs that pay well and can’t be outsourced – jobs building solar panels and wind turbines; constructing fuel-efficient cars and buildings; and developing the new energy technologies that will lead to even more jobs, more savings and a cleaner, safer planet,” Obama said.

Members of the LA Conservation Corps planting a tree in Griffith Park in February 2009.

California Governor Schwarzenegger soon followed up by announcing the creation of the Green Corps, pledging \$10 million of economic stimulus package funding to place 1,000 at-risk youth ages 16 to 24 into green jobs over the next year.

“The Green Corps will help underprivileged young people learn job skills while we create a well-trained workforce for clean technology and for the green economy,” he told a group gathered at American River College in Sacramento last March.

For many environmentalists, as well as advocates for low-income people in California and around the nation, it seems that there is now government support for the types of jobs some have been pushing for for years: jobs that require skills, are well paying and local. The hope is also that many of those who had been trained for or expected to find jobs in traditional and often-dwindling blue-collar careers, like manufacturing and construction, could now find “green-collar” jobs using similar skills for a cleaner environment and an improved economy.

Expectations are high. The Center for American Progress released a study in June that found that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) – which Congress passed in February – and the Clean Energy and Security Act – which passed the House in June and is currently being debated by the Senate – could together generate about \$150 billion per year in new clean-energy investments in the U.S. over the next decade (see “National Legislative Update” on page 9). The two acts could also generate a net increase of about

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California ReLeaf is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working to empower grassroots efforts and build strategic partnerships that preserve, protect, and enhance California's urban and community forests.

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1.7 million jobs, according to the study.

One organization that has been key in pushing for this type of legislation is Oakland-based Green for All. The organization believes that a clean energy economy can mean jobs for low-income people, who suffer disproportionately from pollution-caused ailments like cancer and asthma. So-called "green jobs" require skills beyond a high school education, but not as much education as college, which is out of reach for many low-income people, Green for All notes.

"Green collar, career-path jobs that are accessible to Americans from a broad range of educational backgrounds are a win for our economy, a win for our environment, and a win for our workers," says Phaedra Ellis-Lamkins, CEO of Green for All.

One indicator of just how hot the topic of green jobs has become: Ellis-Lamkins was named CEO of Green for All in March, following founder Van Jones' departure from the organization after being named Obama's Special Advisor for Green Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

What's in it for the Trees?

"If you look at the legislation, there have been important, highly-visible signals that

*"...a win for our economy,
a win for our environment,
and a win for our workers"*

*Phaedra Ellis-Lamkins, CEO
Green for All*

the conversation has changed," says Alice Ewen Walker, executive director of the Alliance for Community Trees, a nationwide coalition of urban forestry organizations. "There's certainly been a lot of dialogue about green jobs in Congress. Green jobs are popping up in a lot of places."

In late January, the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition, which represents 20 national organizations that promote healthy urban forests and green spaces, including the Alliance for Community Trees, sent a letter to the U.S. Senate urging senators to include green infrastructure, specifically, city forests, when creating the economic stimulus plan.

"Taxpayer dollars invested in the enhancement of city forests will provide multiple benefits in terms of urban green job creation and specialized training, pollution abatement, healthier and more livable neighborhoods, energy conservation, and long-term infrastructure savings in cities throughout the United States," the letter stated.

While much of ARRA's emphasis is on green jobs, most of the measures in the package focus on three main areas: energy efficiency, transportation investments, and renewable energy.

"There's a lot of organizations and industries already promoting this concept

and most of the examples of jobs you'll see written into legislation are in alternative energy, for example, manufacturing solar panels," Ewen Walker says.

But Ewen Walker says she believes it will not be long before it becomes clear that the arboriculture industry has much to offer in the way of green jobs as well. The environmental and community health benefits of a vibrant urban forest, combined with the opportunity for creating high-paying, skilled labor careers fits well with the overall ARRA package. Urban forestry



Photo: LA Conservation Corps

Experienced LA Conservation Corpsmembers demonstrate tree planting to 40 newly hired youth. Street trees were planted in the city of Van Nuys.



Left: Two Friends of the Urban Forest volunteers recruit other youth during March Gladness.

Below: LA Conservation Corpsmembers dig a hole in the Kenneth Hahn State Park where 60 trees were planted in October 2007.

of the primary distributors of the partnership's free tree program. The program provides corps members with a variety of skills, including not only nursery operation, tree planting and tree care experience, but also customer service, delivery driving and data entry skills. Corps members will distribute about 400,000 trees this year as part of the program.

"We have become the tree broker for the city of L.A.," says Dan Knapp, the Los Angeles Conservation Corps'

advocates from across the country hope that local government officials will recognize this and decide to use some of the economic stimulus package money that comes their way to benefit the urban forest, she says.

To that end, of the \$787 billion in the ARRA package, more than \$76 million has been designated for USDA Forest Service projects in California, including \$6 million for "Region-wide Fuels Reduction and Urban Tree Planting Projects." California ReLeaf will be over-seeing these funds, providing pass-through grants to 18 nonprofit organizations and municipalities to carry out tree planting, tree care and job training projects across the state.

Network Members as Models?

Many of the members in California ReLeaf's network already have the type of job-training programs that the economic stimulus package seeks to create. Community Services and Employment Training, Inc. in Visalia, the Orange County Conservation Corps, Our City Forest in San Jose, the Urban Corps of San Diego and many other network members are providing valuable job training skills for young people while expanding and caring for the urban forest.

The Los Angeles Conservation Corps, a California ReLeaf network member, has been providing at-risk youth training for a variety of jobs, including tree planting and maintenance for more than 20 years.

In 2006, the L.A. Conservation Corps joined with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's Trees for a Greener L.A. and the Million Trees L.A. initiative to be one

enthusiastic deputy director, adding that about 95 percent of the public trees in Los Angeles come through the LACC.

The LACC is one of the largest and most diverse conservation corps in the nation. It consists of the Clean and Green program for youths aged 14 to 17 and the Young Adult Corps for those aged 18-24.

Because many of their members have dropped out of high school and have difficulty returning to school because of the need to work, the LACC also offers members the opportunity to earn their high school diploma. Knapp says there are about 300 members of the Young Adult Corps. The year-round program is divided in two, with half the members working and the other half attending school and then rotating.

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Photo: L.A Conservation Corps

Green Jobs, continued from page 3

The program is highly structured, he says. There is no tolerance for gang affiliation, a “three strikes and you are out” policy on tardiness and strict rules about behavior. For many of the youth in the corps, Knapp says, this is their first encounter with this kind of structure.

“We pride ourselves on serving the hardest to serve. Our only requirement is that they are willing to work,” he says.

The LACC has already received some economic stimulus funding, designated for summer employment for young people, specifically providing outreach to residents on the variety of city recycling and environmental services – including tree planting – that are available. Knapp hopes that LACC’s demonstrated successes and history of good fiscal management and oversight will mean that more ARRA money will be coming their way soon.

Job Training in San Francisco

Another California ReLeaf network member, Friends of the Urban Forest, based in San Francisco, has a smaller, but urban forest-specific, youth training program. Now in its 16th year, the Youth Tree Care Program provides 48 young people, ages 14 to 18, valuable job skills, a paycheck and the opportunity to help improve San Francisco’s environment.

The program has four sessions, one in the spring and one in the fall, which are conduct-

ed around the school schedule, and two intense four-week sessions in the summer.

Like L.A. Conservation Corps members, many of the young people who come to work with Friends of the Urban Forest come from difficult backgrounds. They are recruited for the program by organizations like the Boys and Girls Club of San Francisco and Hunters Point Family, a community-based youth development agency.

The students do some tree planting, but the majority of their work is in pruning and young tree care, FUF’s Program Director Doug Wildman says. Friends of the Urban Forest volunteers plant about 1,000 trees each year. In order to ensure the viability of those trees, the organization checks in at two months, eighteen months and three years with its tree care program to see how the trees are faring. Young people with the Youth Tree Care Program are primarily responsible for the three-year tree care inspection, pruning about two-thirds of these trees, Wildman says.

The participants start at minimum wage, but can receive a raise by demonstrating a good work ethic. Since this is a first job for many of the young people in the program, there are some basic life skills and employment skills involved as well, Wildman says.

“Much of it, honestly, is just learning how to be [an employee],” he says.

There is also opportunity for advancement. Wildman says during each session staff members keep an eye out for young people who can return for another session to serve as assistant leaders and crew leaders.

Like many nonprofit organizations, Wildman says funding the youth program is always a challenge. Funds are pieced together from donations and grants, he says, and certainly any piece of the economic stimulus package funding would be welcome. The investment in the kids’ futures and in the environment is well worth it, Wildman says.

“It’s a really fantastic way to spend money,” he says of the program. “We get a lot of work done, especially in the summer. These kids are fantastic.”

Crystal Ross O’Hara is a freelance journalist based in Davis, California.

Below: LA Conservation Corpsmember puts the finishing touches on a newly planted tree in the city of Van Nuys in September 2008.



Photo: LA Conservation Corps

Raising Money in a Difficult Economy

By Ashley Mastin & Annette Delos-Santos

Now, more than ever, it is important for nonprofits to be proactive with fundraising strategies. Instead of falling victim to the economic crisis, some organizations are using these times as an opportunity to create innovative ways to raise funds. Below are two examples of exciting and interesting projects that can be replicated in different communities throughout the state.

Tree Fresno - Operation Tied Up

Tree Fresno has always had a solid membership, but after seeing a major slump this year, they decided that the organization had to take action. Operation Tied Up was the answer. For the program, staff members tied themselves to "Rooty", Tree Fresno's tree mascot, and asked for donations to secure their release. Pictures were taken and sent via email and newsletter flyers to Tree Fresno members along with a plea to help "release the staff from bondage." Members who received the information were asked to pass it along to others who might be interested in Tree Fresno's efforts.

This viral marketing campaign has proven successful. While Tree Fresno has not reached their proposed goal, they were able to collect approximately \$2,500 in under two weeks and are still receiving donations. In addition, the majority of donations have been from new members -- from people who are familiar with the organization, but have never donated before. Overall, Operation Tied Up has been a fun introduction to the world of internet marketing for the organization.



Tree Musketeers - Plaza El Segundo

In 2006, Tree Musketeers was approached by Rosecrans-Sepulveda Partners 3, a nearby development firm, with an interesting fundraising idea. Plaza El Segundo, a large outdoor shopping center, was being built and the plans included 446 trees. Because of a previous donor relationship with one of the development firm's partners, the trees were offered to Tree Musketeers as a fundraising tool.

When renewing their Partners for the Planet membership, Tree Musketeers' members now have the option of donating \$250 or \$500 to receive a custom engraved plaque or paver by a tree at Plaza El Segundo. The developers pay for most expenses related to the project, including the tree and its planting, plaques and pavers including engraving and installation, and any tree maintenance or replacement. Tree Musketeers does administrative work to track available trees, assist donors as they choose a tree, place orders and promote the program.



Tree Musketeers has raised \$23,000 in the past two and a half years and the program has also attracted new members. In addition, Tree Musketeers' logo is engraved on each paver – giving them increased visibility to the thousands of people who shop at Plaza El Segundo. In return for their donation, Plaza El Segundo and its developers are seen as environmentally-friendly and community-minded. Members who have purchased plaques or pavers also feel a sense of ownership in Plaza El Segundo and have become more frequent customers. This partnership has been a winning experience for everybody involved.

Editor's Note: this is the first in a series of occasional articles about raising funds in a difficult economy. If you have a project that you'd like to share with the readers of California Trees, please send your ideas to caltrees@californiareleaf.org.

Ashley Mastin is the Network Coordinator for California ReLeaf and Annette Delos-Santos is an Equal Opportunity Specialist for the USDA Forest Service.

*Above: Staff from Tree Fresno tied to "Rooty", Tree Fresno's mascot.
Photo: Tree Fresno*

*Left: A group of friends pose by the memorial plaque placed on a tree at Plaza El Segundo.
Photo: Tree Musketeers*

California ReLeaf Network Member Profile: Urban ReLeaf

By Crystal Ross O'Hara

When Kemba Shakur first left her job as a corrections officer at Soledad State Prison 15 years ago and moved to Oakland she saw what many newcomers and visitors to the urban community see: a barren cityscape devoid of both trees and opportunities.

But Shakur also saw something else – possibilities.

“I love Oakland. It has a lot of potential and most people who live here feel that way,” Shakur says.

In 1999, Shakur founded Oakland Releaf, an organization dedicated to providing job training for at-risk youth and hard-to-employ adults by improving the urban forest of Oakland. In 2005, the group joined with nearby Richmond Releaf to form Urban Releaf.

The need for such an organization was great, particularly in the “flatlands” of Oakland, where Shakur’s organization is based. An urban area criss-crossed with freeways and home to many industrial sites, including the Port of Oakland, West Oakland’s air quality is impacted by the many diesel trucks traveling through the area. The area is an urban heat island, regularly registering several degrees higher than its tree-filled neighbor, Berkeley. The need for a job-training organization was also significant. Unemployment rates in both in Oakland and Richmond are high and violent crime is consistently two or three times the national average.



Top: Kemba Shakur, founder of Urban ReLeaf.

Photo: Michael Macor, SF Chronicle

Bottom: Members of Urban ReLeaf pose after a hard day of work during "Plant a Tree Day".

Photo: Urban ReLeaf

Brown vs. Brown

Urban Releaf’s big kick off came in the spring of 1999 during the “Great Green Sweep,” a challenge between then-Mayors Jerry Brown of Oakland and Willie Brown of San Francisco. Billed as “Brown vs. Brown,” the event called on each city to organize volunteers to see who could plant the most trees in one day. The rivalry between the quirky former governor Jerry and the flamboyant and outspoken Willie turned out to be a big draw.

“I was shocked at the level of anticipation and excitement it brought,” Shakur recalls. “We had about 300 volunteers and we planted 100 trees in two or three hours. It went so fast. I looked around after that and I said wow, that’s not enough trees. We’re going to need more.”

Oakland emerged victorious from the competition and Shakur was convinced that more could be done.

Green Jobs for Oakland's Youth

With donations and state and federal grants, Urban Releaf now plants about 600 trees a year and has trained thousands of young people. The skills the kids learn include far more than planting and caring for the trees. In 2004, Urban Releaf teamed with UC Davis on a CalFed-funded research project designed to study the effects of trees on reducing soil contaminants, preventing erosion and improving water and air quality. The study called on the Urban Releaf youth to collect GIS data, take runoff measurements and conduct statistical analysis -- skills that readily

translate to the job market.

Providing young people in her neighborhood with experience that makes them more employable has become increasingly important, Shakur says. In recent months, West Oakland has been shaken by the deaths of several young men due to violence, some of whom Shakur knew personally and had worked with Urban Releaf.

Shakur hopes to one day open a “sustainability center,” that would serve as a central location for providing green jobs for young people in Oakland, Richmond and the greater Bay Area. Shakur believes more job opportunities for young people could stem the tide of violence.



“Right now there’s really an emphasis on the green jobs market and I’m enjoying it, because it is putting an emphasis on providing jobs for the underserved,” she says.

Shakur, a mother of five, speaks with passion about the young people who come to the organization from the tough neighborhoods of Oakland and Richmond. Her voice fills with pride as she points out that she first met Rukeya Harris, the college student who answers the phone at Urban Releaf, eight years ago. Harris saw a group from Urban Releaf planting a tree near her house in West Oakland and asked if she could join the work program. She was only 12 at the time, too young to join, but she continued to ask and at 15 she enrolled. Now a sophomore at Clark Atlanta University, Harris continues to work for Urban Releaf when she comes home from school.



Top: Urban ReLeaf members join Kemba Shakur in celebrating a successful tree planting event.

Photo: Urban ReLeaf

Plant a Tree Day

Urban Releaf has managed to thrive despite tough economic times because of support from state and federal agencies as well as private donations, Shakur says. For example, in April, members of the Golden State Warriors basketball team and employees and executives of Esurance joined Urban Releaf volunteers for “Plant a Tree Day,” sponsored by Esurance, an online insurance agency. Twenty trees were planted at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Way and West MacArthur Boulevard in Oakland.

“This is an area that’s really been devastated by foreclosures,” says Noe Noyola, one of the volunteers at “Plant a Tree Day.” “It’s stark. There’s a lot of concrete. Adding 20 trees really made a difference.”

Noyola first connected with Urban Releaf while seeking a grant from the local redevelopment agency to improve the landscaping on a median in his neighborhood. Like Shakur, Noyola felt that replacing the scraggly plants and concrete in the median with well-planned trees, flowers and shrubbery would improve the scenery and the feeling of community in the neighborhood. Local officials, who could not immediately respond to the project, urged him to work with Urban Releaf and from that partnership the 20 trees were planted.

The first step, Noyola says, was convincing some hesitant local residents and business owners that promises of improving the neighborhood would be met. Oftentimes, he says, organizations from both inside and outside of the community are all talk, with no follow through. Permission from the landowners was necessary because sidewalks had to be cut in order to plant the trees.

The entire project, he says, took only about a month and a half, but the psychological impact was instantaneous and profound.

“It had a strong effect,” he says. “Trees are really a tool for reshaping the vision of an area. When you see trees and a lot of greenery, the impact is immediate.”

Besides being beautiful, the tree plantings have inspired residents and business owners to do more, Noyola says. He notes that the difference made by the project has inspired a similar planting on the next block over. Some residents have even planned “guerrilla gardening” events, unauthorized volunteer plantings of trees and greenery at abandoned or blighted areas.

For both Noyola and Shakur, the greatest satisfaction in their work has come from what they describe as creating a movement -- seeing others motivated to plant more trees and overcome what they at first saw as limits to their environment.

“When I first started this 12 years ago, people looked at me like I was crazy and now they appreciate me,” Shakur says. “They said, hey, we have issues of prison and food and unemployment and you’re talking about trees. But now they get it!”

Crystal Ross O’Hara is a freelance journalist based in Davis, California.

Member Snapshot

Urban ReLeaf

Year founded: 1999

Joined Network: 1999

Board Members: 15

Staff: 2 full-time, 7 part-time

Projects include:

Tree planting and maintenance,
watershed research, job training
for at-risk youth & hard-to-
employ adults

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**The California ReLeaf Network is growing!
We are happy to welcome two new member groups
and celebrate 100 members!**

Since 2005, Tree Lodi has been promoting and advocating for the planting, maintenance, and preservation of Lodi's urban forest through education, stewardship and community involvement. In 2006, the group planted several of the centennial trees to honor Lodi's 100th anniversary. They are also regular participants in the Arbor Day and Earth Day celebrations held at Lodi schools and parks and have partnered with the city of Lodi in environmental awareness programs. www.treelodi.org



Top:
Photo: Tree Lodi



Solano Advocates Green Environments (SAGE) was founded in 2008 with the mission to create beauty and promote appreciation and understanding for the stewardship of the environment. SAGE strives to create environments that are conducive to learning and to cultivate thriving health for the local community while addressing global warming and community health. As its first outreach project, SAGE commissioned 15 Bay Area artists to depict 15 of Vallejo's historic trees. The exhibit also included photographs of the trees featured in each piece of artwork along with historic commentary and photographs. www.vallejourbanforest.com/urban.htm

Left: SAGE commissioned "Do Not Top Trees" posters and postcards that will be printed and distributed by the US Department of Forestry.



SAGE's Urban Forest Celebration featured works by 15 different artists. Photos: Solano Advocates Green Environments

2009 California Urban Forests Conference

October 1 - 3, 2009
Ventura Beach, California

"What Now? What Next? A New Direction for Urban and Community Forestry"

Join California ReLeaf and California Urban Forests Council for two and a half days that focus on the management, research science, funding and innovation that influence urban forestry. You'll leave this conference more prepared to effect positive change once back home!

ReLeaf Network members: \$100/\$125 after Sept. 11
A \$300 stipend will be available to ReLeaf Network groups to cover travel expenses.

To register, visit: www.caufc.org/Annual%20Conference



What Now? What Next?
A New Direction for Urban and Community Forestry

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 volunteer involvement.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Atherton Tree Committee
California Association of Local Conservation Corps
California Community Forests Foundation
California Oak Foundation
California Urban Forests Council
Canopy
CREEC
CityTrees
Common Vision
Fair Oaks Beautification Association
Friends of Carmel Forest
Friends of El Cerrito Trees
Friends of Rodeo, Refugio, and Carquinez Watersheds
Friends of the Urban Forest
Friends of Trees of Nevada County
Greater Modesto Tree Foundation
Keep Eureka Beautiful
Keep Oakland Beautiful
Magic
Marina Tree Committee
Marin ReLeaf
Mendocino County ReLeaf
Merced River Watershed Ecological Restoration Club
Mountain View Trees
National AIDS Memorial Grove
North Hills Landscape Committee
Oak Habitat Restoration Project
Our City Forest
Patrick's Point Garden Club
Petaluma Tree Planters
Placer Tree Partners
Richmond ReLeaf
Roseville Urban Forest Foundation
Sacramento Tree Foundation
Solano Advocates Green Environments

San Mateo Arboretum Society
San Mateo Park Association
South San Francisco Beautification Committee
Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
Streaminders
TREE Davis
Tree Lodi
Tree Partners Foundation
Urban ReLeaf
Vacaville Tree Foundation
Vallemar Conservators
West Oakland Commerce Association
Woodland Tree Foundation

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

Atascadero Native Tree Association
Carpinteria Beautiful
CSET
Goleta Valley Beautiful
Greenspace: The Cambria Land Trust
Ojai Valley Land Conservancy
Santa Barbara Beautiful
Santa Barbara County ReLeaf
Santa Margarita Community Forestry
Tree Foundation of Kern
Tree Fresno
Trees for Cayucos
Tree Guild of Arroyo Grande
Tule River Parkway Association
Urban Tree Foundation
Visalia Beautification Committee
WildPlaces

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Arroyo Seco Foundation
City Beautiful of San Diego

Community ReLeaf
Coronado Street Tree Committee
Fallbrook Land Conservancy
Highland Environmental Education Coalition
Hollywood/Los Angeles Beautification Team
Huntington Beach Tree Society
Ivey Ranch Park Association
Keep Downey Beautiful
Keep Riverside Clean & Beautiful
Koreatown Youth & Community Center
Los Angeles Community Forest Advisory Committee
LA Conservation Corps
Mountains Restoration Trust
North East Trees
Orange County Conservation Corps
Orange for Trees
Pasadena Beautiful Foundation
Professional Tree Care Association of San Diego
ReLeaf Costa Mesa
Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District
San Bernardino Volunteer Yard Beautification Project
San Diego Community Forest Advisory Board
Seal Beach Tree Committee
ShadeTree Partnership
Tree Lindsay
Tree Musketeers
TreePeople
Trees for Seal Beach
Urban Corps of San Diego
Victoria Avenue Forever
West Hollywood Tree Preservation Society

If you would like to reach any of the groups listed, or if you are with a group that would like information on membership in the California ReLeaf Network, visit us online at www.californiareleaf.org, or contact (530) 757-7333, info@californiareleaf.org.

National Legislative Update

By Alice Ewen Walker

Energy Efficiency Through Trees Act

Tree planting for energy conservation was included as part of the landmark Waxman-Markey climate and energy bill that passed the House of Representatives on June 26th. Congresswoman Doris Matsui's amendment was accepted, incorporating in whole the Congresswoman's Energy Efficiency Through Trees Act. The provision would authorize creation of a Department of Energy program to work with utility companies to plant trees for energy conservation. The approach is mod-

eled on existing successful programs such as "Sacramento Shade," delivered by the Sacramento Municipal Utility District in partnership with the Sacramento Tree Foundation.

This is an important milestone that deserves thanks and appreciation to Congresswoman Matsui for her leadership. Urban forestry advocates nationwide are united in support of this legislation. Next, the 930-page climate legislation will head to the Senate, where it will undoubtedly face rigorous debate. The legislation has a long road ahead, meaning that urban forestry advocates should educate members of the Senate about its value as part of any energy and climate legislation that moves forward.

Green Communities Act

On April 30th, Congresswoman Carol Schwartz introduced H.R. 2222 to fund \$120 million for community-based

(continued on page 11)

State Budget Deal Finally Signed

After months of heated rhetoric and contentious debate, California's Legislature and Governor Schwarzenegger came to agreement in late July on a \$25 billion plan to close the ever-widening budget gap.

Since general fund savings were at the heart of the budget matter, bond dollars already allocated in February for urban forestry stayed intact, though these funds come with their own set of unique fiscal challenges (see Bond Freeze story below). Remember, the 2009-2010 budget was actually signed months early this year, and provided almost \$7 million from Proposition 40 and 84 to CAL FIRE for urban forestry grants.

Finally, in an unfortunate budget note, our colleagues from the local conservation corps (many of whom are California ReLeaf Network members), suffered a big blow with the elimination of General Fund support to the statewide program, cutting the overall operations budget by \$8.25 million.

Bond Sales Help Thaw the Freeze, but New Projects are far from the Horizon

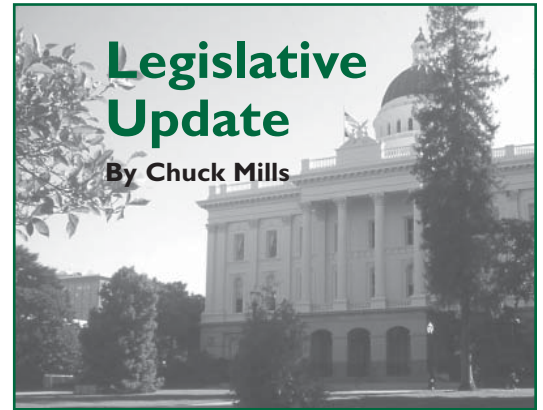
With unexpectedly strong public bond sales coming from the State Treasurer's Office in March and April, Governor Schwarzenegger declared an end to the bond freeze on Earth Day for projects already in progress. Since then, the Natural Resources Agency and all its 20 departments and the Office of the Treasurer have been going through an extensive process vetting each invoice and project to make sure that they qualify to receive proceeds under the Tax-Exempt and Build America Bonds sold in spring. There are over 5000 projects, and many, if not most, need to be put through these processes individually.

The Department of Finance and Natural Resources Agency are going through each of the Propositions separately, starting with Proposition 12. Once a proposition is processed, the funding Departments will be instructed that they can start the process of paying bills and starting up frozen projects funded by that Proposition. CAL FIRE has reported they have finished work on Propositions 12 and 40 and are currently working on Proposition 84.

So while the dozens of urban forestry

Legislative Update

By Chuck Mills



project affected by the freeze may soon move forward again, new projects and new bond appropriations, such as the \$7 million for urban forestry in 2009-10 State Budget, are not likely to surface for some time. This is further exacerbated by Executive Order S-09-09 issued by Governor Schwarzenegger on June 8th which states that "except for projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, or projects funded by bonds, grants or projects specifically mandated by court orders, or public-private partnerships that require no direct state expenditures, any funds encumbered on or after March 1, 2009, for contracts entered into for which goods or services have not been provided or for contracts proposed to be entered into during the 2008-2009 fiscal year by State agencies and departments, regardless of funding source, are hereby disencumbered and the funds will revert to their original funding source if no legal liability will be incurred by the State."

Urban Forestry Takes a Back Seat to Other Environmental Issues in 2009

While the 2008 Legislature celebrated several aspects of urban forestry through bills that created new funding sources, extended volunteerism and refined the Urban Forestry Act of 1978, the first year of the 2009-10 regular session has produced little that directly impacts California ReLeaf and its Network members. Below is a synopsis of this year's measures supported by California ReLeaf:

AB 135 (Jeffries) would allow CAL FIRE to waive the cost sharing requirement for urban forestry grants when the funding source for a grant prohibits cost sharing requirements. The bill responds to conflicts raised with funds forthcoming from the American Recovery and

Reinvestment Act of 2009, and is now moving through the State Senate.

AB 231 (Huffman) establishes a Climate Protection Trust Fund which could potentially support urban forestry projects. The measure is moving through the Senate.

AB 1364 (Evans) authorizes state agencies to modify the terms of grants/contracts impacted by the bond freeze and also prevents agencies from terminating grants/contracts without the agreement of the grantee. The measure is moving through the Senate.

SB 333 (Hancock) aimed to create a Voluntary Greenhouse Gas Emission Offset Program Fund that would have supported urban forestry projects. California ReLeaf worked with the California Council of Land Trusts to provide amendments that strengthened the measure, but were never inserted due to the bill's failure to move past the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SB 553 (Wiggins) would have made nonprofit organizations eligible for penalties and interest when the state does not make payments in a timely fashion (for-profit firms are eligible for this now). Although strongly embraced by both sides of the aisle, the costs to the state could have been in the millions in the next few years and, consequently, the bill died in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

For more information on these and other legislative issues, please contact Martha Ozonoff at California ReLeaf, mozonoff@california-releaf.org, (530) 757-7333.

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greening in cities. ACT member organization Pennsylvania Horticulture Society hosted a field hearing on the legislation and is a leading advocate for the program, which would be authorized by the Secretary of Commerce and delivered through the Economic Development Administration. Urban forestry and volunteer-based action are prominently featured in the legislation.

GREEN Act

California ReLeaf, along with our national partner the Alliance for Community Trees is grateful to Congressman Ed Perlmutter for his inclusion of green infrastructure and landscape amenities in H.R. 2336, which is expected to be scheduled for a hearing in the House Financial Services Committee this summer. The legislation provides incentives and discounted financing to promote energy efficiency for housing, commercial structures and other buildings.

FY 2010 Forest Service Budget

This year, the annual budget offered few surprises as the administration focused on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Nearly \$40 million in urban forestry-related projects will receive funding through the ARRA as part of the Forest Service's fuels reduction and ecosystem restoration work, including over \$6 million that will be coordinated by California ReLeaf for projects throughout California.

The president's annual budget for FY 2010 provided relief to forestry programs formerly slated for deep cuts under the previous administration. The president's budget calls for the creation of a separate \$282 million contingency fund for combating forest fires, which will reduce or eliminate the practice of borrowing money from other programs to pay for emergency fire suppression.

The Urban and Community Forestry Program received \$30.77 million, which is just over a \$1 million more than the previous year's budget. One exception to the level-funding trend is Forest Legacy, which increased 84% to \$91.1 million, reflecting the popularity and growing reach of this land purchase program. The Forest Service plans to pilot the delivery of the new Community Forests and Open Space Conservation program using \$1 million from Forest Legacy funds.

Forest Service Research is increasing its leadership commitment to urban forests via the creation of Urban Long Term Research Areas (ULTRAS) – up to 16 projects will be selected by the National Science Foundation for \$4.8 million to support interdisciplinary research about the dynamic interactions between people and natural ecosystems in urban settings. The program is a joint partnership of NSF and USFS Research.

Alliance for Community Trees and other members of the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition have advocated for \$50 million for the U&CF program in recent years. In the future, we believe a \$100 million appropriation for this high-impact program is advisable, allowing for the doubling of core state programs, resources for regional scale projects, and focus funds for key issues.

Alice Ewen Walker is executive director of the Alliance for Community Trees, a national network of 160 nonprofit organizations engaged in urban and community forestry (alice@actrees.org; www.actrees.org). For free action alerts on this issue, sign up for ACT's NeighborWoods Network e-mail list.



About
California Trees

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Take Action: National Legislative Update

- Alert your U.S. senators to Section 205 - Tree Planting Programs, an amendment offered by Congresswoman Matsui, which was included in the American Clean Energy and Security Act. Ask them to include this provision in final version of the bill.
- Ask your U.S. congress member to co-sponsor the Green Communities Act (H.R. 2222)
- Ask your U.S. congress member to co-sponsor the GREEN Act (H.R. 2336)
- Ask your U.S. congress member and senators to support \$100 million for the Urban and Community Forestry Program within the FY 2010 US Forest Service Budget.

Links for Further Information

American Clean Energy and Security Act (H.R. 2454) – Amendment #1 offered by Ms. Matsui of California:

http://energycommerce.house.gov/Press_111/20090520/hr2454_II_matsui.pdf

Alliance for Community Trees Action Agenda:

http://actrees.org/files/Newsletter/leaflet_09jun3.html

FY 2010 Forest Service Budget:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/publications/budget-2010/fy-2010-budget-request.pdf>

ARRA Projects Funded by the Forest Service:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/arra/arra-releasedfsprojects-2009-6-3pm.pdf>



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