

# California Trees

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## Fruit Trees: Planting Health in Urban California

By Jane Braxton Little

The numbers are in and they aren't pretty. Two-thirds of American adults are overweight and one in three is considered obese, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Fitness-freak Californians are not much better off than the rest of the nation: Half of the adults in the state are overweight or obese, and their kids are not far behind.

For urban forest advocates, the solution to this obesity epidemic is dirt simple—literally. Plant more trees. They cite study after scientific study linking urban greenery and public health. Trees and green-space result in:

- Residents who are three times as likely to be physically active;
- A 40 percent reduction in people who are overweight or obese;
- Children with reduced symptoms of attention deficit and hypertension disorder;
- A lower incidence of asthma in children; and
- Altogether less stress.

*(continued on page 2)*



*Students plant an orchard at their school in Watsonville, CA.*



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



## Making Progress: Federal Funds Help Urban Forestry

By Crystal Ross O'Hara

There are more jobs and trees throughout California communities this year, according to reports from 17 community-based groups that were awarded grants from California ReLeaf for urban forestry projects.

California ReLeaf received \$6 million last year from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) economic stimulus funding to support 17 urban forestry projects in California. The local groups

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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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## Fruit Trees *continued from page 1*

“Urban greening, when enjoyed by all communities, brings us to a true state of health,” says Desiree Backman, deputy director of the Sacramento Tree Foundation.

Today the Foundation and other organizations across California are making a direct connection between urban forests and health. Their campaigns are aimed beyond the cooling and beautifying effects of trees to the food they can produce: They are planting fruit trees. Teams of latter-day Johnny Appleseeds are carrying sacks of seedlings to backyards and schoolyards, and handing out stacks of educational material in living rooms and classrooms. Their emphasis is the link between health and a diet of fresh foods.

“Offering fruit trees for planting is another piece of the equation – for our kids, our state and for the world. We can have access to healthy foods right in our own backyards,” says Backman.

## THE FRUIT TREE TOUR

For dozens of elementary school kids from San Diego to Ukiah, this message arrives on a psychedelic bus powered by French fry fat. Schoolyards erupt in music as enthusiastic volunteers pour out of the bus and begin dishing up a powerful message in reggae rhymes. “Give back to the Earth, she’ll give back to you,” they chant. “Let your feet be the roots, let your hands be the leaves.”

This is Common Vision’s Fruit Tree Tour, a mix of madcap melodrama and sci-

ence-based horticulture. After a rock-style performance that has kids bouncing in their seats, Common Vision volunteers work with small groups of children, engaging them in concepts that range from water and nutrient cycles to global climate change and the value of fresh food. They talk about trees: the importance of good soil, the right amount of water and sunlight. Then, with reverence and a commitment to the future, the children plant a fruit tree.

“The day that bus comes to school is the best day in the entire year,” says Joe Coberly, a former Common Vision volunteer who is now a garden coordinator at Alone Elementary School in Watsonville. The kids learn the value of fresh foods and health, he says. “Eventually, they are going to eat what they plant.”

The Fruit Tree Tour is the world’s largest and longest-running vegetable-oil-powered caravan -- and the only one that leaves orchards in its wake, says Megan Watson, the tour’s coordinator. Since they launched it in 2003, the program has reached 60,000 children and planted nearly 6,000 trees, most of them fruit trees. The goal is to inspire students to take part in caring for their own health and the health of their community and the Earth.

It also aims to feed people, especially kids. Lack of access to real fresh fruits and vegetables is a leading driver of childhood obesity, says Watson, whose email tagline reads, “Do not be afraid to go out on a limb. That’s where the fruit is.”

“Our food systems, petroleum economy and culture of consumerism are caus-



*Right: Sacramento Tree Foundation volunteers teach community members about fruit trees.*

ing big problems not only for the environment but for our bodies, too. Thankfully, simple acts like planting a tree and growing food have a ripple effect that can create a big change for a healthier people and planet,” says Watson.

In South Los Angeles, Common Vision helps enhance change by working with students at Environmental Charter High School. The school provides volunteers to local elementary and middle school orchard programs as part of its focus on empowering young people through civic and environmental problem solving.

Steve McCray found out fast how effectively high school students can work with younger kids. “These buses pulled up with murals all over them and began showing our kids how to plant trees,” says McCray, principal of William Green Elementary School in Lawndale, six miles south of Los Angeles. By the end of the afternoon, William Green Elementary had 18 new fruit trees. All are expected to bear this fall, McCray says.

“What an opportunity to raise awareness of the value of growing produce for our own neighborhoods to eat well,” he says.

In addition to spending a day teaching the fundamentals of botany and planting, the orchard program gives the 18 older students an opportunity to demonstrate the self-esteem they themselves have gleaned through the real world experiences that are part of their high school curriculum. They share their self-confidence as they build relationships with the younger students. That’s as important as the lessons in how food and health are connected, says McCray.

“It is beautiful and powerful!” he says. And the orchard planting has had one other result: McCray went home and planted fruit trees in his own yard: “No one can tell me this is not contagious.”

## SACRAMENTO’S FRUIT TREE INITIATIVE

In the state capitol, the Sacramento Tree Foundation has adapted its 20-year shade tree program to address public health more directly. When Backman joined the Foundation as the deputy

director, she brought a doctorate in public health and a decade of experience working with programs designed to increase fruit and vegetable consumption. Her research demonstrates that trees can reduce body-mass index in children by encouraging physical activity. The fruit tree initiative was born in a eureka moment when Backman and her co-workers realized the obvious: Trees can be food growers, too.

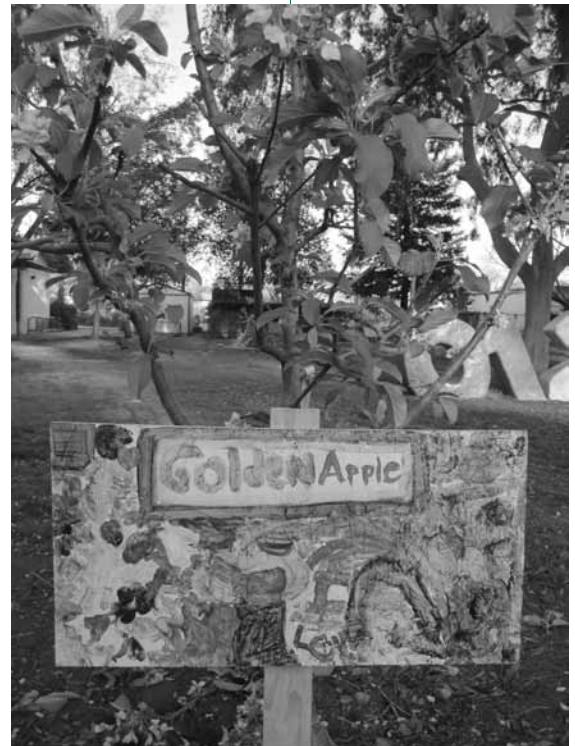
“Unfortunately, not everyone in our communities has access to nutritious, natural food,” she says.

So Backman designed the fruit tree initiative to help make fresh foods available to those who need it most: families who are at or below the federal poverty level. She found several project partners including the California Department of Public Health, which provides the nutrition educational material; the Sacramento Municipal Utility District, the Foundation’s partner in the shade tree program; and Quaker Oats, which pays for the trees.

When Tree Foundation representatives visit clients in the shade tree program they determine if they are eligible for the fruit tree program. They then make another visit to explain the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables and engaging in physical activity. Those who sign up for the fruit tree initiative are invited to attend a community health event, where they will receive additional education about the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity. They also take part in planting demonstrations, cooking classes and tree-care seminars.

Then they choose their free fruit trees. Tree Foundation workers help them select

*Below: This apple tree in Claremont, CA was planted during Common Vision’s first statewide Fruit Tree Tour in 2005. This year’s tour made a stop to visit the existing trees, and help the students create educational art for their fruitful orchard.*



*(continued on page 5)*

carrying out the projects recently wrapped up the first quarter of work and had much progress to report.

“We’ve been extremely pleased with the progress our grantees are making,” says Joe Liszewski, Executive Director of California ReLeaf. “These urban forestry projects will leave positive physical, social, economic and environmental impacts on California communities for years to come.”

These projects will result in more than 23,000 trees planted, the creation or retention of close to 200 jobs and job training for scores of young people over the next two years.

The projects vary considerably in scope, location and goals. Forty-one jobs have been created or retained because of the funding and dozens of young adults have received urban forestry training. More than 2,300 trees have been planted and an additional 2,600 have been maintained.

Our City Forest is one of the larger projects. With \$750,000 in ARRA funding over the next two years, the organization will create 19 jobs, plant 2,000 trees and care for an additional 2,000 trees as part of San Jose’s 100,000 tree-planting campaign.

During the first quarter of 2010, Our City Forest spent much of its effort providing community outreach and education. This included creating a logo and online tree registry for the organization’s “Every Tree Counts” project and providing tips on tree care and maintenance.

In addition, Our City Forest planted more than 150 trees and purchased close to 300 additional trees to be planted in the future.

Goleta Valley Beautiful reports several

ups and downs in its project, which will use \$100,000 over the next two years to create 12 jobs and to plant

close to 300 trees with the help of members of the California Conservation Corps.

The organization was hampered by the fact that corps members are being called on for other projects and their availability has been impacted by state furlough days. At the same time, it also reports that it made good progress in tree planting, helped by experimenting with a new watering system, late rains and moist soil.

Meanwhile, the Koreatown Youth and Community Center reports that it is ahead of schedule on its project, planting more than 300 of the 500 trees it intends to plant near the soon-to-be-completed Exposition Light Rail Transit Line in Los Angeles.

“When this comes online, we expect more traffic, more congestion,” says Byron Shinyama, deputy director of programs for KYCC. “This project will beautify the neighborhood and contribute to civic pride and offset some of that pollution.”

Other California ReLeaf grant project highlights for the first quarter include:

- The California Urban Forests Council began planning and outreach for three large-scale tree planting events.
- The City of Chico hired contract labor to prune 121 large, old-growth trees in Bidwell Park.
- Community Services Employment Training enlisted Sequoia Community Corps members to prune young trees in downtown Visalia.
- The City of Daly City hired two utility worker aides and a greenhouse/nursery specialist, purchased tools and gear and conducted tree planting and maintenance.
- The City of Porterville pruned trees and removed mistletoe growth in the existing urban forest.



*Top right: The logo for Our City Forest’s “Every Tree Counts” program.*

*Below: A row of old-growth trees in Chico that have been pruned as part of the ARRA project. Many of the trees’ limbs had hung precariously over paths where community members would walk or park their cars.*



- The Hollywood/Los Angeles Beautification Team held two community events and began planning and marking for tree plantings.
- The Los Angeles Conservation Corps began recruiting and training young adults for urban forestry work and planted more than 130 trees.
- North East Trees implemented a job training program for young adults and planted more than 1,100 trees in several parks in the Los Angeles area.
- The Sacramento Tree Foundation hired three coordinators to advance the regional Greenprint Initiative.
- Tree Fresno launched the Tarpey Village project, a plan to plant 300 trees in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood.
- The Urban Corps of San Diego hired filled several urban forestry positions, provided concrete removal and planted nearly 90 trees.
- Urban ReLeaf held several community outreach events for residents of Oakland and Richmond, and planted more than 100 trees.

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

### **Fruit Trees** *continued from page 3*

trees that are appropriate for the growing site. Clients can select what's most appropriate for their tastes and needs from a long list of fruit trees: Asian pear, orange, apple, pomegranate, peach and more.

Tree Foundation workers teach the new fruit tree owners everything from planting and watering to pruning and harvesting. They also teach their clients how food relates to their own health. It's a very popular program, says Backman. "When people are offered the opportunity they want to take advantage of it."

The Sacramento Tree Foundation's fruit tree initiative has planted 139 trees so far. It is currently limited to income eligibility but Backman would like to expand it to plant fruit trees throughout Sacramento.



*Left: Community Services Employment Training members over their completed tree well expansion project in downtown Visalia.*

## **BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**

Making fresh fruits and other nutritious foods available is key to more than better health, says Neelam Sharma. As executive director of Community Services Unlimited, she works with Common Vision to plant orchards at several schools in South Los Angeles. Along with planting and tending the fruit trees, Sharma's non-profit organization focuses on the deeper connections between food and culture. "We talk with students about the way they think about food and their relationships to food – who they are and their food heritage," she says.

And they talk about food and health. The national obesity epidemic has its roots in diet, both poor choices of food and limited access to nutritious foods, says Sharma. Overweight adults are at risk of chronic diseases that include high blood pressure, stroke, Type II diabetes, heart disease and certain kinds of cancer. Almost every kid knows someone suffering from diabetes or heart disease, Sharma says.

So the students talk about how foods they eat are related to health and why their communities don't have healthier foods available to them. This goes well beyond nutrition and exercise. "Our mission is building self-reliant and healthy communities that are sustainable," Sharma says.

The focus on nutrition includes cooking in class and sending the recipes home, where students cook for their families. "They do it with a lot of pride -- and these are young people who never thought about cooking anything other than Top Ramen," says Sharma.

Planting fruit trees in school and residential backyards won't solve the problem of hunger or access to healthy foods. And it won't end obesity. But orchard programs are a powerful beginning, says Coberly, the Watsonville school gardener: "These are seeds that are planted. They need to be tended and re-taught to really sink in. But what a great start!"

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

## California ReLeaf Network Member Profile: Greater Modesto Tree Foundation

By Donna Orozco

The Greater Modesto Tree Foundation owes its origins to a French photographer who came to town in 1999 wanting to photograph the largest and most unique trees. He had a contract with Fuji Film and had heard about Modesto's fame as a Tree City.

Chuck Gilstrap, who became the foundation's first president, recalls the story.

Gilstrap, then the city's superintendent of urban forestry, and Peter Cowles, director of public works, took the photographer around to shoot trees.

Later when Gilstrap was helping the photographer get ready to leave town, the photographer said in very broken English, "How can we plant a tree for every baby born in the world for the

year 2000?"

Gilstrap mentioned the conversation to Cowles, who said, "Even though we couldn't plant a tree for every child born in 2000, maybe we could do it for every child born in Modesto."

Parents and grandparents loved the idea. A year later, thanks to a federal Millennium Green grant and hundreds of volunteers, the fledgling group had planted 2,000 trees (because it was the year 2000) along a mile-and-a-half stretch of Dry Creek Regional Park Riparian

Basin, a tributary of the Tuolumne River that runs through the southern part of town.

The organization applied for non-profit status soon after and continued its "Trees for Tots" program. Trees for Tots continues to be the largest tree planting program organized by the foundation, with more than 4,600 Valley Oaks planted to date. The funding comes from California ReLeaf grants.

### 6,000 Trees

In the 10 years of its existence, the Greater Modesto Tree Foundation has planted over 6,000 trees, according to current president Kerry Elms (perhaps an appropriate name).

"We are an all-volunteer group and, except for an insurance policy and the cost of maintaining our web site, all donations and membership fees are used to provide trees for our various programs," he said. "All work related to our projects is performed by our members and community volunteers. We have a large number of groups (Boy and Girl Scouts, schools, churches, civic groups and many other volunteers) that assist with planting and other efforts. Our volunteers have totaled over 2,000 since we began."



*Above: Volunteers plant a tree during Jewish Arbor Day festivities.*

*Right: Many youth groups are involved with GMTF plantings. This group volunteered through Congregations Building Community, a faith-based non-profit organization.*



Elms said they never have trouble getting volunteers. Youth groups are especially encouraged to get involved. The City of Modesto is a strong partner in many of the foundation's planting projects.

### Stanislaus Shade Tree Partnership

The foundation plants nearly 40 trees five times a year as part of the Stanislaus Shade Tree Partnership, which plants shade trees in low income neighborhoods. From its beginning, the organization has created wonderful partnerships, and this project is done in conjunction with the Modesto Irrigation District (MID), the Sheriff's Department, Police Department, City Urban Forestry Division and many volunteers.

The foundation sends out its arborist a week before the planting to make sure the tree size and site are appropriate (not on the north side or too close to the homes). MID buys the trees and the Sheriff's Department delivers them. Each home can receive up to five trees.

"The reason MID is supporting this effort is that if the trees are planted appropriately, they will shade the home, causing a 30 percent energy savings with less air conditioning needed in the hot summer months," said Ken Hanigan, public benefits coordinator for MID. "We have found that the homeowner needs to have an invested interest and then the family will have more of a tendency to maintain the trees. Therefore, the family is required to dig the holes.

"It is a feat of love and community effort that is just amazing," Hanigan said.

### Memorial Plantings

The foundation makes it possible for memorial or living testimonial trees to be planted in honor of friends or family. The foundation provides the tree and a certificate and helps the donor to select the variety and location of the tree. The donors provide the funding.

These dedications are heart warming for the donors, and they can have interesting backgrounds. Elms recounted a recent planting on a golf course. A group of men had played golf for many years on the course and when one of the members died, the others decided to honor him by replacing a tree that had fallen on the course after

the flood of 1998. The spot they chose was right on the turn of a fairway that had always been in the way of the golfers. When the tree is grown, many other golfers will be challenged by that tree.

### Grow Out Center

In an effort to grow their own trees, the foundation has collaborated with the Sheriff's Department Honor Farm, which trains low-risk offenders to plant and care for seedlings until they are large enough to plant.

The foundation also distributes and plants trees on Earth Day, Arbor Day and Jewish Arbor Day.

Modesto has been a Tree City for 30 years, and the community takes pride in its urban forest. But, as in all California cities, Modesto has been under severe financial stress for the last several years and no longer has the staff or funding for some of its park and tree maintenance.

The Greater Modesto Tree Foundation and its many volunteers try to fill the gap where they can.

*Donna Orozco is a freelance writer based in Visalia, California.*



*Above: Kerry Elms, GMTF's President, plants a tree at a Stanislaus Shade Tree Partnership event in 2009.*

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#### Greater Modesto Tree Foundation

Year founded: 2000

Joined Network: 2004

Board Members: 11

Staff: None

Projects include:

Stanislaus Shade Tree Partnership, Trees Please, Memorial Tree Program, Jewish Arbor Day

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**D**ear Network Members,

It is with a great sense of excitement that I write this letter to (re)introduce myself as the new Executive Director of California ReLeaf. I joined the California ReLeaf staff as the Grant Coordinator in March 2005, and since then have worked my way up to Program Manager and most recently Program Director. During that time, my duties included grants manager, bookkeeper, IT guy, webmaster and sometimes chief bottle washer. Before coming to California ReLeaf I was a Programs Coordinator for the National Tree Trust in Washington DC, coordinating grant programs and working on other national initiatives.

I am very excited about my new position, although it is a bit daunting to follow in the footsteps of such a dynamic individual as Martha. She was a great mentor and will definitely be missed. These are challenging times in California, to say the least, and I look forward to working with you to find ways to enhance the economic and environmental conditions of California's urban forests. I can be reached at 916-497-0034 or [jliszewski@californiareleaf.org](mailto:jliszewski@californiareleaf.org).

Joe Liszewski



**Nat'l Leg Update** *continued from page 11*

infrastructure, financial and technical assistance for localities to implement green stormwater infiltration and management strategies, and invest in urban revitalization. Urban forestry is specifically identified as a practice the legislation would support. The bill is endorsed by ACT, the American Nursery and Landscape Association, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and others. For more instructions, see <http://www.greencommunitiesact.org/>.

Ask your representative to support H.R. 3734, the Urban Revitalization and Livable Communities Act. It would authorize \$445 million to rehabilitate and revitalize urban parks, connecting children to the outdoors and creating green jobs. The bill is endorsed by the National Recreation and Parks Association, Alliance for Community Trees, and a diverse coalition of interests including the National Police Athletic League. For more instructions, see <http://www.nrpa.org/UrbanParkCoalition/>.

Rally for increased funding for the Urban and Community Forestry Program. This program is funded by the USDA Forest Service and delivered in partnership by state agencies. The urban forestry assistance offered by CAL FIRE relies in great part on this critical program. Ask your representatives and senators to support \$100

million for FY 2011 for the Forest Service U&CF Program. This would significantly grow the scope of the current program, first providing \$40 million for current state cooperative programs plus \$60 million for new targeted, strategic approaches to optimize environmental services, mobilize volunteer stewardship, inventory and assess city forests, and create green jobs. The President's budget provides \$2 million in new funding for competitive urban tree planting projects focused on carbon sequestration and ecosystem services; ACT supports the President's proposed focus on grants, but would urge a larger U&CF budget overall.

To learn more about ACT's action agenda for clean, green and healthy communities, visit Alliance for Community Trees at <http://actrees.org/site/whatwedo/policyalerts/index.php> or contact Alice C. Ewen at 301-277-0040 / [alice@actrees.org](mailto:alice@actrees.org)

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*Alice C. Ewen is executive director of the Alliance for Community Trees, a national network of 160 nonprofit organizations across 40 states and Canada. ACT encourages all organizations engaged in urban forestry to join the alliance. To join online, visit <http://actrees.org/site/getinvolved/index.php>*

## 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 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  
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  
Patricks 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 Trees  
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](http://www.californiareleaf.org), or contact (530) 757-7330, [info@californiareleaf.org](mailto:info@californiareleaf.org).

## GRANT ALERT! FUNDING WILL SOON BE AVIALABLE FOR URBAN FORESTRY PROJECTS

California ReLeaf will have funding available in the coming months for tree-planting and education projects. The program is funded through a contract with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).

Eligible applicants will include incorporated nonprofit organizations and unincorporated community-based groups, with a financial sponsor, located in California.

Please visit us at [www.californiareleaf.org](http://www.californiareleaf.org) for more information.

### We've Moved!

Please make sure your records reflect the changes to our address and phone numbers.

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## **State Budget Crisis Creates Mixed Bag for Urban Forestry Funds**

Though California's staggering economic downturn has created a \$20 billion chasm in the state budget, strong bond sales from Spring will likely help bolster the money in Proposition 84 urban forestry funds allocated in the Governor's proposed 2010-2011 State Budget.

Unfortunately, a measure that would have furthered urban forestry funding goals, sponsored by Assembly Member Wes Chesbro (D-Eureka), was adversely impacted by the severe budget shortfall and is dead for the year. AB 2360, sponsored by CALFIRE and supported by California ReLeaf, would have created a self-sustaining Forest Resources Improvement Fund (FRIF) to provide a steady revenue stream for a variety of forest conservation projects including urban forestry. Though the measure was pegged as cost-neutral, the potential for dollars to be diverted from the General Fund to the FRIF was enough to have the bill held in Assembly Appropriations Committee on May 28.

Thanks much to those network members who joined us in supporting this important bill. Look for California ReLeaf grants available this fall once a budget is in place.

## **Spring Bond Sales Help Thaw the Freeze; Finance Releases Guidelines for Expenditures**

The Department of Finance (DOF) released a bond revenue allocation plan in April 2010 that outlines how dollars generated from future bond sales will be disbursed through the foreseeable future.

Earlier this year, The State Treasurer's Office reported better-than-expected bond

sales on Wall Street in March 2010 that will provide enough capital to continue funding through 2010 all projects frozen in December 2008. Further, the Natural Resources Agency has determined they will receive enough new bond money, approximately \$700 million, to initiate some new projects through various departments and conservancies under the Agency umbrella.

The challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for both new and existing projects have been an ongoing topic of discussion at the State Capitol and among stakeholders. This issue was briefly discussed by Finance at a special subcommittee hearing organized by stakeholders this spring.

The document released by Finance provides a framework and process for general obligation bond-funded projects and programs, which will identify the estimated cash need for each agency by fiscal year and, consequently, the amount the DOF plans to allocate from the planned future sales.

While the goal will be to provide funding to each agency that equals the estimated cash needs of that agency, sales that fall short of expectations and bond project needs will be subject to a prioritization process that will take into account health and safety, contractual liabilities from not funding a project, direct benefits to the General Fund, significant job creation and leveraging other non-state funds.

Most important, once a new project has received funding, it is then categorized as an existing project and elevated in priority to receive allocations from future sales.

## **ReLeaf Endorses State Parks Pass, Opposes Anti-AB 32 Rollback**

The Board of Directors for California ReLeaf voted in late April to support a citizen's initiative that will appear on the November 2010 ballot, and oppose another that would create significant environmental rollbacks relating to climate change adaptation.

ReLeaf has endorsed the State Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust Fund Act (State Parks Access Pass Initiative), which qualified for the November ballot in mid-June. The initiative will permanently provide full funding for California's State Park system by applying an annual \$18 vehicle license fee surcharge to most registered cars

in the state. In return, user fees, or day use fees, would be eliminated from State Parks, allowing Californians free access to these treasured recreational resources.

ReLeaf has also joined in opposition to an initiative to essentially repeal California's landmark climate change law (titled "Suspend Air Pollution Control Laws Requiring Major Polluters to Report and Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions That Cause Global Warming Until Unemployment Drops Below Specified Level for Full Year"). If passed by voters this November, the initiative would significantly undermine the hard work of urban forestry groups and their conservation colleagues that have fought diligently to establish strong forestry protocols adopted by the Air Resources Board.

For more information on these and other legislative issues, please contact Joe Liszewski at California ReLeaf, [jliszewski@californiareleaf.org](mailto:jliszewski@californiareleaf.org), (916) 497-0034.

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## National Legislative Update

By Alice C. Ewen

This spring was an active time for urban forestry initiatives in Washington, D.C. Green advocates, including representatives from California ReLeaf and California Urban Forest Council, traveled to the nation's capitol for Earth Week to join the Alliance for Community Trees (ACT) in advocating for green legislation. The Green Infrastructure Summit, hosted by ACT, engaged guest speakers such as Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA), Congresswoman Alyson Schwartz (D-PA), and Congressman Earl Blumenaur (D-OR) to rally support for urban forest investments. You can view materials and session presentations from this landmark event online at [www.actrees.org/site/stories/summit10.php](http://www.actrees.org/site/stories/summit10.php).

This summer, please advance green legislation by visiting with your delegation during the weeks that lawmakers are in district. This is the time of year when lawmakers are at home visiting constituents and seeking feedback about the issues that are

important to you. They appreciate concise, actionable requests (i.e. "Please support Bill Number ###").

In particular, we suggest you write, call and/or set up meetings with Senator Barbara Boxer and her staff to engage support for ACT's 2010 Advocacy Agenda ([www.actrees.org/site/stories/2010\\_advocacy\\_agenda.php](http://www.actrees.org/site/stories/2010_advocacy_agenda.php)) and, most importantly, ask support for three provisions in the Climate Bill. Senator Boxer is the chairwoman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, which has jurisdiction over the Climate Bill. This is also an election year for her, so remind her why our amendments are important and how they would impact you and other constituents. We hope everyone in California urban forestry circles will reach out to Senator Boxer this summer to reinforce this united message.

## Urban Forest Action Agenda

Ask Senator Boxer to support the Tree Planting Program provision, Section 167 of S. 1733. As the Senate develops its plans for climate change legislation, it is important that Senator Boxer know about Section 167, a provision introduced by Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon in the Senate and Congresswoman Doris Matsui of California in the House, which would support non-profit-utility partnerships to plant trees for energy savings, modeled off of the successful SMUD program. Our goal is that any final climate legislation should contain this section.

Ask for support for the Small Business Environmental Stewardship Assistance Act of 2010. This program provides funding for tree planting to revitalize commercial districts. It would support the nursery industry, which is primarily composed of small family businesses. Ask your Congressman to support H.R. 4509 and your Senators to support S. 3279, the Small Business Environmental Stewardship Assistance Act of 2010, which appropriates \$50 million for each of the fiscal years 2010-2015. The legislation is also supported by the American Nursery and Landscape Association and National Association of State Foresters. For more detailed instructions, visit [www.treesmeanjobs.com](http://www.treesmeanjobs.com).

Ask for support for H.R. 2222/S. 3055, the Green Communities Act. The Green Communities Act would support green






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About

## California Trees

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Join us August 4-6 in Sacramento as we discover new ways to market trees to the public. We'll discuss:

- Public Health -How do trees make your city a healthier place to live?
- Community Design - How do trees fit within the community? How can we build in the benefits of trees from the beginning?
- Livability/Sustainability - How do trees fit into a sustainable lifestyle?
- Social Movements & Social Marketing - How do we reach people using the tools they use the most?
- Media Advocacy - How do we use the media to give a strong call to action that will eventually move public policy (and create more funding)?

**To see speakers and the agenda or to register, visit our website at [californiareleaf.org/conferences](http://californiareleaf.org/conferences).**