



Creating An Urban Forestry Vision

California's urban forestry professionals and practitioners understand the need to fully fund urban forestry efforts at both the local and statewide level. They see the reduced maintenance and care by local governments, the removal of urban trees for various purposes that range from disease to development and the diminishing dollars for new tree plantings.

Though urban forestry's visibility increased in the public and political eye in 2013, it is still perceived as a small issue, or "added benefit" to neighborhoods, rather than a necessity. Even then, necessity doesn't always translate into results.

Over the last several years, resource conservation programs in California suffering from budget cuts and programmatic shortfalls have put critical issues at the forefront of both the political and public agenda. Three of them are still grabbing headlines: agriculture, water and parks. The common link between all is a shortfall of funding, and a message of increasing need.

For agriculture, the focus is on state budget cuts to the Williamson Act subventions – a state-sponsored program that reimburses counties for property taxes lost to farmers committed to keeping their land in active agriculture. Under Governor Schwarzenegger, Williamson Act subventions were trimmed by millions. Outcry from advocates ranging from Defenders of Wildlife to the California Farm Bureau resulted in editorials across the Central Valley and other key agriculture communities stressing the need to restore the funds or risk losing critical farmland in the process. Still, Williamson Act subventions went mostly unfunded through the Schwarzenegger Administration and remain unfunded to date.

Water is California's most challenging resource conservation issue. How do we move water from the Delta to support state needs without jeopardizing the existing ecosystem? How does California provide safe drinking water to all communities throughout the state, and who pays? According to the U.S. EPA, California has an unmet water infrastructure need of \$44.5 billion¹ that was last addressed through ballot measures supported in 2006 providing \$9.4 billion for water quality, watershed protection, water management and flood control.

Since 2006, California's water needs have changed and increased. In 2009, the Legislature voted to place an \$11.1 billion water bond on the 2010 ballot to address multiple issues including surface storage. Twice moved by the Legislature

to different ballots, the measure is now considered unpassable by both supporters and opposition in the resource conservation sector. And this is despite an historic drought now crippling the state's water supply.

Finally, and most notably, State Parks have been grossly underfunded for years, especially in meeting the backlog of deferred maintenance needs that may now exceed \$1 billion². Though State Parks received \$250 million in the 2006-2007 State Budget, most of these dollars were sent back to the General Fund the next year, followed by Administration-led efforts to close state parks.

Two proposals were championed in the Legislature by then Assembly Member John Laird (D-Santa Cruz) seeking to impose a vehicle license surcharge on California drivers to sustain State Parks. Both efforts failed, but prompted a citizen's initiative (Proposition 21) in 2010 that sought to accomplish this objective through a vote of the people. Proposition 21 suffered defeat at the ballot box with only 42% support.

State parks are a California treasure. We have more state parks than any other state, and public support for State Parks before 2012 was evident from the countless blogs and media hits regarding their proposed closure. Starting in 2008, thousands of people flooded legislative office mailrooms and fax machines with letters and petitions urging the Legislature and governor not to close State Parks. These successful efforts focused on the urgent message to retain what had been previously committed to State Parks in terms of funding, about \$13 million. So while a more visible and less contentious issue like State Parks succeeded in retaining funding where other efforts failed (i.e. Williamson Act), a well-organized and largely unopposed campaign to solve the State Parks shortfall through a new fee was soundly defeated.

Urban forestry lacks the luxuries of all three of these issues, and has no guaranteed funding at the state level. It lacks a built-in core constituency of millions of Californians. And it lacks the sense of urgency that water, parks and agriculture share. Consequently, this

report suggests that a vision for supporting urban forestry at the statewide level cannot be grounded in need, but must instead be messaged as opportunity.

In 2009, for example, Dr. Greg McPherson wrote a conceptual outline of what a 50-million Tree-Planting Campaign could look like in California (Appendix C). His proposal using previous research shows California has about 200 million plantable public sites in urban areas. McPherson asserts at least 50 million sites are readily available for new tree plantings³. The proposal goes on to identify process and to outline how the program could be managed and administered. It focuses on the opportunity being presented.

A strategic, well-executed, visible and visionary campaign promoting urban forestry opportunity through multiple moving parts could provide the essential element for securing sustainable urban forestry funds. This report recommends an approach that revolves around the simple message or opportunity to promote no net loss of urban tree canopy in California starting with the major metropolitan areas.

THE NO NET LOSS URBAN FORESTS CANOPY CAMPAIGN

Urban forests face a host of natural and man-made threats, many of which are closely connected to the earth's changing climate conditions. A recent U.S. Forest Service study reports that tree cover in the country's urban areas is decreasing by 4 million trees a year⁴. Though no comprehensive research has been done on tree loss throughout California, the study shows a one percent decline in trees and shrubs in Los Angeles despite plantings from the city's Million Trees LA campaign and other active, long-term tree planting initiatives.

Outside the state, the devastating impacts of superstorm Sandy on people and the urban trees in New York City and large areas of New Jersey are well known.

Globally, rising seas are affecting millions around the world. In Australia, climate swings have brought floods that inundate large swaths of the country after decades of drought, and are being followed by prolonged record-breaking heat waves that continue to this day.

California's urban forest is susceptible to these same natural events – and much more. Small storm events like those that hit the Los Angeles area in 2011 downed dozens of trees in Pasadena. Record-setting heat waves coupled with an historic drought will further impact our trees and plants. Restoring tree and vegetation cover is pivotal to restoring a more natural climactic environment.

In addition, California continues to combat invasive species and imported pests like the shot hole borer. This small beetle drills into trees and brings with it a fungus that is planted in bored galleries under the bark where larvae thrive, hatch, eat, breed and repeat the cycle by carrying the fungus to other trees. Though originating in South East Asia or Africa, the beetle now has an increasing presence in Southern California.

Tree diseases such as Sudden Oak Disease (SOD) continue to devastate the state's oak population, particularly in coastal zones north of Monterey. A report published in July 2013 by the California Oak Mortality Task Force asserts California's 2012 SOD mortality levels were the highest since 2007. Elevated oak deaths in 2013 saw about 257,000 trees killed across 39,600 acres⁵.

Californians and CAL FIRE can take a leadership role in addressing these canopy losses by promoting a long-term strategy that tackles urban forest declines through strategic plantings and sound investments.

The USFS Pacific Southwest Research Station is completing a statewide inventory of California's urban forest by the middle of 2014. The inventory can provide the long-needed tool to assess canopy cover across the state and determine where deficiencies lie⁶. This is the critical first step toward building an urban forestry initiative.

Among the suggested elements and considerations necessary to build a successful path toward progress are:

- Avoid a "trees-per-year" target
- Focus on canopy cover equity

- Incorporate private tree plantings to leverage public investment
- Explicitly detail and value co-benefits
- Conduct a multi-faceted education campaign

AVOID "TREES-PER-YEAR" TARGET

Tree planting campaigns serve several purposes including raising public awareness and raising money. The most visible campaigns aim high, starting at about one million trees over a set time in a major metropolitan area. Recent examples include New York City, Chicago, Houston, Denver, Los Angeles and Sacramento.

A 2012 research paper co-authored by Dr. Greg McPherson examined the status of these campaigns - and results through July, 2011⁸. His research data suggests some efforts will succeed and others will fail.

McPherson also evaluated the success of the very visible Million Trees LA Campaign in 2014. Former LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's pledge was one million trees planted during his tenure, which expired in 2013. The final tree count was about 407,000⁹.

A statewide urban forest initiative largely supported through public investment must be grounded in realistic expectations and demonstrate results beyond mere tree count. Informed data suggests the largest tree planting campaigns in California supported by both public and private investment (Los Angeles and Sacramento) will not meet their stated goals during the timelines originally proposed.

Success for a statewide program could be largely dependent on up-front variables such as availability of tree stock, labor and money. These are critical considerations that will motivate how to implement such an effort and indicate the fiscal and political feasibility of success.

Available labor and tree supplies are not the primary challenges. California's network of nonprofit urban forestry organizations contribute up to 355,000 hours of volunteer labor each year. These are hours used to plant and care for more than 130,000 trees annually. Once other essential labor elements are factored in – such as local and state conservation corps and private and public agencies working in urban forestry – California has the capacity to get hundreds of thousands of trees in the ground each year.

The commercially-grown tree stock to accomplish this is readily available. Four of the top state nurseries surveyed for this report show they collectively grow two million trees for resale in California every year. This breaks down to about one million 5-gallon, 800,000 15-gallon and 200,000 24-gallon box trees. These nurseries provide around 30 percent – 40 percent of the total tree supply to California.

While labor and tree stock are readily available, money is not. CAL FIRE and numerous non-profits agree that initial tree planting and three-year care costs start at \$200 per tree. Multiplied by 50 million, as the McPherson report suggests, a campaign of this magnitude could have total costs exceeding \$10 billion dollars. Even setting a benchmark of one million tree plantings per year brings costs of more than \$100 million if all are paid for with public funds.

No Net Canopy Loss in California

Many counties in California protect native oaks and other native trees, as well as trees of a certain trunk diameter, often called "legacy trees."

More than 100 counties have ordinances requiring mitigation when native trees are removed due to new development. Often the mitigation replacement is calculated based on the size of the tree trunk removed (in inches diameter) to capture the value of large native trees. In the 2011 General Plan Update for Sacramento County, the Conservation Element took the first step to developing a no net loss of urban tree canopy regulation.

The Conservation Element's Policy CO-145 states: "Removal of non-native tree canopy for development shall be mitigated by the creation of new tree canopy equivalent to the acreage of non-native tree canopy removed. New tree canopy acreage shall be calculated using the 15-year shade cover values for trees species."⁷

The Conservation Element does not use the term "no net canopy loss" and the canopy replacement requirement applies only to canopy displaced by new development. It also does not apply to existing residential or commercial tree canopy. This policy is innovative in that it applies to non-native trees, breaking the trend to only protect native oaks or in a smaller number of jurisdictions, trees of a certain size.

Because these costs are so high, this report does not recommend setting a “trees-per-year” target as part of a multi-year, statewide tree planting initiative. In a state the size of California, any annual goal of less than one million trees planted might be perceived as underwhelming when compared to the state’s existing 200 million urban trees.

High tree count also isn’t necessarily the desired outcome. Multiple variables such as planting improper species, planting small-canopy species and accounting for replacement trees that do not actually “grow” California’s urban forest are not always taken into consideration when tree quantity alone is sought.

Any commitment to one million new trees or more planted annually would need to account for these variables. And that would still be cost-prohibitive, even if public funds were significantly leveraged with private contributions. Instead, such an undertaking should focus on ...

CANOPY COVER EQUITY

Overcoming the disparity in urban tree canopy cover that exists in California, primarily in low income and underserved neighborhoods, is key to a successful statewide canopy campaign. Numerous studies from noted scholars and scientists offer wide ranging views on what constitutes appropriate canopy cover in urban areas. This is largely dependent on geography, population density, industrialization and other variables.

In California, there is some certainty as to where more canopy is unquestionably needed. This has been detailed in previous assessments of canopy cover in major metropolitan areas, such as Los Angeles, where affluent areas reach canopy cover of 41 percent, while more impoverished districts dip as low as 7 percent¹⁰.

As previously mentioned, the USFS’s statewide survey will provide California with a roadmap. It will help identify where the critical low-canopy areas are throughout the state and help us develop a potential baseline – or minimum canopy cover percentage – for California communities.

This approach also accomplishes three important objectives that are either not overtly addressed in more traditional tree-planting campaigns, or are the source of scrutiny for those campaigns:

- Canopy cover equity is not tied to a definitive tree count. Undoubtedly, a successful initiative will result in hundreds of thousands of new trees in the ground, but this approach avoids the stigma of a defined number in either the long or short term.



- Canopy cover equity is not tied solely to tree planting. Efforts to ensure increased or maintained canopy cover will incorporate urban forestry strategies including proper tree care and management, increased tree preservation efforts, pest and disease control and expanded research. A no net canopy loss campaign for California’s urban forest must vigorously support existing mature trees while also planting new ones.
- Canopy cover equity is an environmental justice issue. As discussed in other sections of this report, unprecedented attention is being directed to disadvantaged communities throughout California via

public policy changes and building community awareness. From a recently enacted statute guaranteeing specific state dollars benefit disadvantaged communities to a successful statewide campaign that guarantees a human right to safe drinking water, the state’s environmental justice movement is pushing back against decades of neglect in California’s most impoverished areas. Urban forests are a part of that environmental justice equation, especially when ensuring all communities have adequate canopy cover. The continued link of urban forests to social and environmental justice will be essential for success.

LOCAL URBAN FOREST EFFORTS MUST LEVERAGE STATE INVESTMENT

The existing model of providing local governments and nonprofits with state or federal funds to promote urban forestry at the local or regional level has proven successful on a case-by-case basis. To these projects, funding recipients bring private dollars, multiple variations on “in-kind” donations such as trees and equipment, plus thousands of volunteers providing labor for tree planting and tree care.

What this model lacks, however, is a larger strategy to harness and sustain local public agency buy-in for maintaining these urban forests. In fact, major metropolitan areas like San Francisco are actually moving in the opposite direction by shifting public tree care responsibility away from the public sector to residents¹¹.

A no net loss urban forestry initiative must bring businesses, local public agencies and residents to the table. This initiative must provide them with incentives or recognition for voluntarily taking ownership of supporting and sustaining community forests. This could be achieved through State recognition of these efforts, such as CARB’s Cool California challenge (Appendix D), nominal tax incentives, or through the development of urban forest maps such as those utilized by Sacramento Tree Foundation and Friends of the Urban Forest.

Ultimately, a statewide urban forest campaign will need to demonstrate a shift in thinking about urban forests and their value at the local level. One measure of success at the end of a statewide campaign would be local government ownership for the care and maintenance of their public urban forests. One of the best ways to move the compass on this point is:

EXPLICITLY DETAIL AND VALUATE THE BENEFITS OF URBAN FORESTS

A primary reason California urban forests remain under-funded and often neglected is their true value is not adequately captured and conveyed to society. While various calculators and reports show the positive monetary effects of urban forests, these tools often translate into talking points that are met with limited success.

Our state is in a strong position to define how we cumulatively detail and valuate the full range of benefits that urban forests provide by using the upcoming USFS statewide inventory. This tool will allow the state to evaluate the true value of existing urban forests, such as what was completed recently in San Jose. This March 2013 study inventoried and assessed San Jose’s 1.6

million tree urban forest, and reached this conclusion:

“The asset value of San Jose’s existing urban forest is \$5.7 billion, or \$3,634 per tree. San Jose’s urban forest produces ecosystem services and property value increases valued at \$239.3 million annually. The largest benefit, \$154.6 million, is for increased property values and other intangible services. Building shade and air temperature decreases from trees reduce residential air condition demand by 415,000 MWh, saving \$77 million in cooling costs each year. The existing urban forest intercepts 1.2 billion gallons of rainfall annually, which reduces storm water runoff management costs valued at \$6.7 million. If carbon dioxide sequestered and emissions avoided from cooling savings by the existing trees, a total of 100,181 tons, were sold at \$10 per ton, the revenue would be \$1 million¹².”

Compiling this level of data could spark the much-needed conversation of moving local governments towards “buying” the asset value of community forests – starting with California’s top 10 major metropolitan areas. Models already exist for this, and are being utilized in Chesapeake Bay (Appendix E). The release of i-Tree 2014 Mobile Software in February could contribute significantly toward valuating these benefits as the new version of this popular tool includes updates to i-Tree Canopy. It can estimate the value of ecosystem services, the values related to carbon sequestration and storage and pollution removal.

Co-benefits calculations starting to gain acceptance at the state level could serve as local models too. For example, the California Energy Commission has assigned a five percent adder to estimate non-energy benefits associated with all energy efficiency projects under Proposition 39. The

co-benefits calculator includes improved air quality and improved health and safety as non-energy considerations¹³.

CONDUCT A MULTI-FACETED EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

A successful statewide urban forest initiative on a large scale starts by developing a steering committee to guide the process from beginning to end. This could potentially become a role for the California Urban Forests Advisory Committee. Or it could be a new coalition that leverages expertise from practitioners, nonprofits, government and the science and education sectors.

In either case, this collective will need to develop a multi-faceted education campaign targeting local governments (i.e., planners and elected officials) and the general public. The education component will also require a unifying message that expands on the no net loss approach to urban forests in California. One opportunity that perhaps stands out from others is revisioning the Invest From the Ground Up (IFGU) campaign supported by the California Urban Forests Council.

IFGU is a new public education initiative supported by state, private and federal funds. It shows Californians how investing in trees and green spaces creates great neighborhoods. The campaign began in 2011 and could benefit this effort through if messaging adjustments and additional community buy-in could be achieved. The overall IFGU objective connects homeowners, business owners, local governments and agencies, utilities, organizations and community leaders in cities across California. It demonstrates, “investment in our trees and green spaces gives us back much more than we put in¹⁴” and is closely aligned with materials outlined in this report.



CONNECTING THE CAMPAIGN WITH FORESTRY

Though some would argue that “all of California is an urban forest,” the traditional reach of urban forestry does not extend into some geographic regions.

Three potential challenges to a statewide urban forest campaign centered around no net loss of existing canopy are geography, scale of opportunity and funding. Connecting a no net loss campaign to traditional forestry and urban forestry could create opportunity to address these challenges.

Over the last 200 years, 15 million acres of California forestland were deforested or converted¹⁵. In 2003, CAL FIRE estimated that 95 percent of California's historic riparian forests and woodlands have been permanently converted to other uses.

Though millions of acres of the state's forests are gone, California remains one-third covered by forests (as defined by CAL FIRE in the 2010 Forest and Rangeland Assessment). The state has the most diverse suite of forest types nationwide and the most diverse conifer forests globally. The potential benefits for merging the goals of protecting both forest and urban forests include:

- Geography. Urban forestry has its support base largely grounded in the Bay Area, Central Valley, Southern California and some of the Inland Empire, with few inroads into the Sierra and Northern California. The largest, most productive, and beneficial forest stands - such as those in the Klamath watershed - occur in the Sierra and Northern California. A combined effort has the potential to increase the representative audience statewide.
- Scale of opportunity. Urban forests provide very strong benefits in several areas including energy conservation, improved air quality and environmental justice. They even tie in directly to the most pressing environmental issue currently facing California – drought. Forests, however, elevate this issue to a completely new level. Nearly 85 percent of California's average annual runoff comes from forested watersheds¹⁶. Forests are the first filters for the state's water, ensuring high quality water for surface storage reservoirs. These reservoirs ultimately supply agricultural fields and urban households. Forest meadows play a critical role in the state's water system, acting as sponges collecting water during wet periods and releasing it slowly during dry periods. Restoring forest structure can also significantly increase water yields through capturing and retaining more snowfall. Significant political and public perception capital could be gained by aligning all forests during this historic dry period.
- Funding nexus. Traditional forest stands yield major carbon sequestration benefits. CAL FIRE estimates that California's forests pull 30 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents out of the air each year. Other reports suggest California's forests currently store approximately 5.1 billion tons of CO₂e¹⁷. The US Forest Service estimates the state's 200 million urban trees add another 4.5 million metric tons to these figures¹⁸. Given that the most likely revenue stream to support a statewide campaign of this magnitude is cap-and-trade auction proceeds (as discussed later in Sections VII and VIII), adding traditional forests significantly strengthens the argument that this is an appropriate use of such funds.

Though such a joint effort would elevate overall costs, it would also elevate the number of beneficiaries and potentially leverage additional funding sources. The merging of traditional forests and urban forests in a no net loss campaign could also spark the interests of influential environmentally-focused stakeholders. This includes the Nature Conservancy and Pacific Forest Trust.





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Immediate Opportunities

More has happened in the world of California urban forestry funding since 2012 than could have possibly been imagined two years ago.

Several state agency reports and guidance documents consider urban forestry as one of many tools to reduce energy consumption, improve water quality, increase water supply, support environmental justice in disadvantaged communities and play an important role in helping to meet the State's greenhouse gas reduction targets. Those reports and position papers, coupled with stakeholder determination and outreach, are now translating into immediate urban forestry funding opportunities. These statewide funding sources could last for the next several years or more.

CAP-AND-TRADE AUCTION REVENUE

Much of 2013 was devoted to raising awareness about what cap-and-trade auction revenues could fund and what that would look like over a three-year time frame. The end result was an Investment Plan produced by the California Air Resources Board highlighting recommended investment opportunities. Urban forestry is prevalent throughout the document and continues to be embraced by multiple stakeholders in cross-cutting sectors.

A small group of natural resource non-profits formed a Natural and Working Lands Coalition in 2013 devoted to funding forests, wetlands, local parks, agriculture and urban forests through cap-and-trade auction revenues. Throughout 2013, this coalition met with decision makers at CARB, CAL EPA, the Department of Finance, the Natural Resources Agency, the Brown Administration and the Legislature to see where support might lie. Feedback was largely positive, with forestry, urban forestry and agriculture often highlighted as priorities.

The portion of the Investment Plan focusing on natural resources highlighted this coalition's platform and preferred entities for administration with the exception of local parks.

In addition, an alliance of transportation, energy, affordable housing and natural resources non-profits formed to create a joint platform for cap-and-trade auction revenue spending. Led by Housing California and TransForm, this Sustainable Communities for All Coalition sponsored legislation to support

its platform that includes natural resources as an integral element.

Like all cap-and-trade legislation introduced in 2013, the bill was held. The coalition continues, though. Its platform now specifies that community forestry and local parks are the only natural resource projects supported by this coalition for urban investments.

The Sustainable Communities for All Coalition also met with the same decision-makers over the course of 2013. Most of the debate was directed towards the GHG reduction benefits of transit-oriented development and the role of metropolitan planning organizations – rather than state agencies – in delivering greenhouse gas reduction projects. Urban forestry was never questioned as a viable and defensible use of these funds. The coalition's platform was also included in CARB's Investment Plan. Also, a small group of environmental justice non-profits led by the Coalition for Clean Air and the Asian Pacific Environmental Network formed around the idea that the goals and objectives of Senate Bill 535 cannot be overlooked when cap-and-trade auction revenues are spent. Unlike other coalitions made up of groups directly benefitting from specific investments, the 535 Coalition is supporting a five-prong platform guided by the GHG reductions and other benefits these projects and programs would bring to disadvantaged communities, also known as communities of opportunity. Urban forestry is included in this platform.

More than any other alliance surrounding cap-and-trade, the 535 Coalition now has tremendous political clout in the Legislature and with key implementing agencies. Its meetings with agency officials have largely concluded with broadbased support for the group's platform and the benefits its projects would bring to disadvantaged communities.

Collectively, these efforts and more have put urban forestry in the governor's 2014-15 cap-and-trade expenditure plan. According to that plan, \$18 million could go to CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program to help meet the goals of AB 32. Though the Legislature will have some control over how cap-and-trade dollars flow, there is growing recognition that the first projects funded through cap-and-trade auction proceeds should utilize existing programs. These initial

projects should provide multiple benefits, be able to clearly demonstrate GHG reductions and be legally defensible as meeting the goals and objectives of AB 32. Urban forestry meets all of these requirements.

While competition for cap-and-trade auction revenues will remain very strong during the next several years, urban forestry benefits are being embraced by three distinct coalitions, all of which carry significant political clout. In addition, all three groups carry an identical message directing cap-and-trade funds to CAL FIRE for the Urban and Community Forestry Program.

The economic merits of pursuing this funding every year in which cap-and-trade continues cannot be overstated. Securing cap-and-trade auction revenues of \$20 million each year over the next several years to support CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program would provide the resources to fund a long-term urban forestry campaign. It would also meet other statewide urban forestry staffing, granting and administration needs. Cap-and-trade revenues would compensate for bond funds that have supported the program over the last 13 years and even allow for significant growth.

Urban forestry has high political visibility due to its standalone merits as a greenhouse gas reducer. It is quickly becoming a champion within the State Capitol, the Administration and among stakeholders in cross-cutting sectors.

CARB has already publicly declared its intent to continue the cap-and-trade program beyond 2020. In a funding stream providing billions of dollars in new revenue each year, urban forestry benefits by requiring only a fraction of these funds. This small amount would allow urban forestry programs to continue meeting the goals of the 2013 Draft Scoping Plan produced by CARB and by setting benchmarks for success across all sectors.

A long-term vision that utilizes cap-and-trade auction funds for sustainability and growth over the next several years must be explored. Details are in Section VII.

LUMBER PRODUCTS TAX

The other most significant development for urban forestry in the last two years was the passage of AB 1492, frequently called the Lumber Products Tax. This is the only law explicitly seeking to fund the Urban and Community Forestry Program through a sustainable revenue source.

The tax is currently generating about \$27 million per year, with program oversight running through the Natural Resources Agency. In a 2013 interview, Assistant

Secretary of Forest Resources Management Russ Henley outlined his immediate vision of what must be accomplished with these funds. He also speculated on how they could support urban forestry.

The Natural Resources Agency created the AB 1492 Triangle. It highlights an immediate focus on data assembly and sharing, transparency and efficiency and ecological performance measures. Henly said these values are what will apply to programs that must be funded by the tax, primarily the review of timber harvest plans.

After all mandated programs have been funded, and the Agency has some certainty that these values are being adhered to, discretionary programs may be funded as money becomes available, likely starting in 2015. Topping that list is CAL FIRE's California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) and the Urban and Community Forestry Program.

Unlike cap-and-trade, though, funds for discretionary programs will be limited – likely ranging between \$5 million - \$10 million annually. There also will be fierce competition for these funds among agencies and programs identified in AB 1492. There have already been legislative efforts made to prioritize discretionary funds for other purposes.

Will Lumber Products Tax revenues provide the kind of sustainability that cap-and-trade or other prospective long-term strategies could for urban forestry? Probably not. But money from this tax may be enough to keep the program alive in times of dire economic uncertainty.

Henly describes his expectation for the distribution of discretionary funds as one that is based in part, on need. If cap-and-trade funds are supporting the Urban and Community Forestry Program in any given year, stakeholders shouldn't look to the

Lumber Products Tax for an additional boost. However, in times (such as fiscal year 2013-14) where there is no local assistance grants funding for urban forestry, and the federal dollars that CAL FIRE relies on for staffing are threatened, Lumber Products Tax revenues could be the funding source that keeps the program going.

As further detailed in Section VII, the Lumber Products Tax should be regarded as the primary "safety net" for the Urban and Community Forestry Program. An annual appropriation of even \$1 million or \$2 million would support staff and possibly some local assistance funding.

And unlike cap-and-trade or bond dollars, the Lumber Products Tax is permanently set in statute. It will continue to provide millions in new revenue to California for a very narrow set of state priorities including urban forestry.

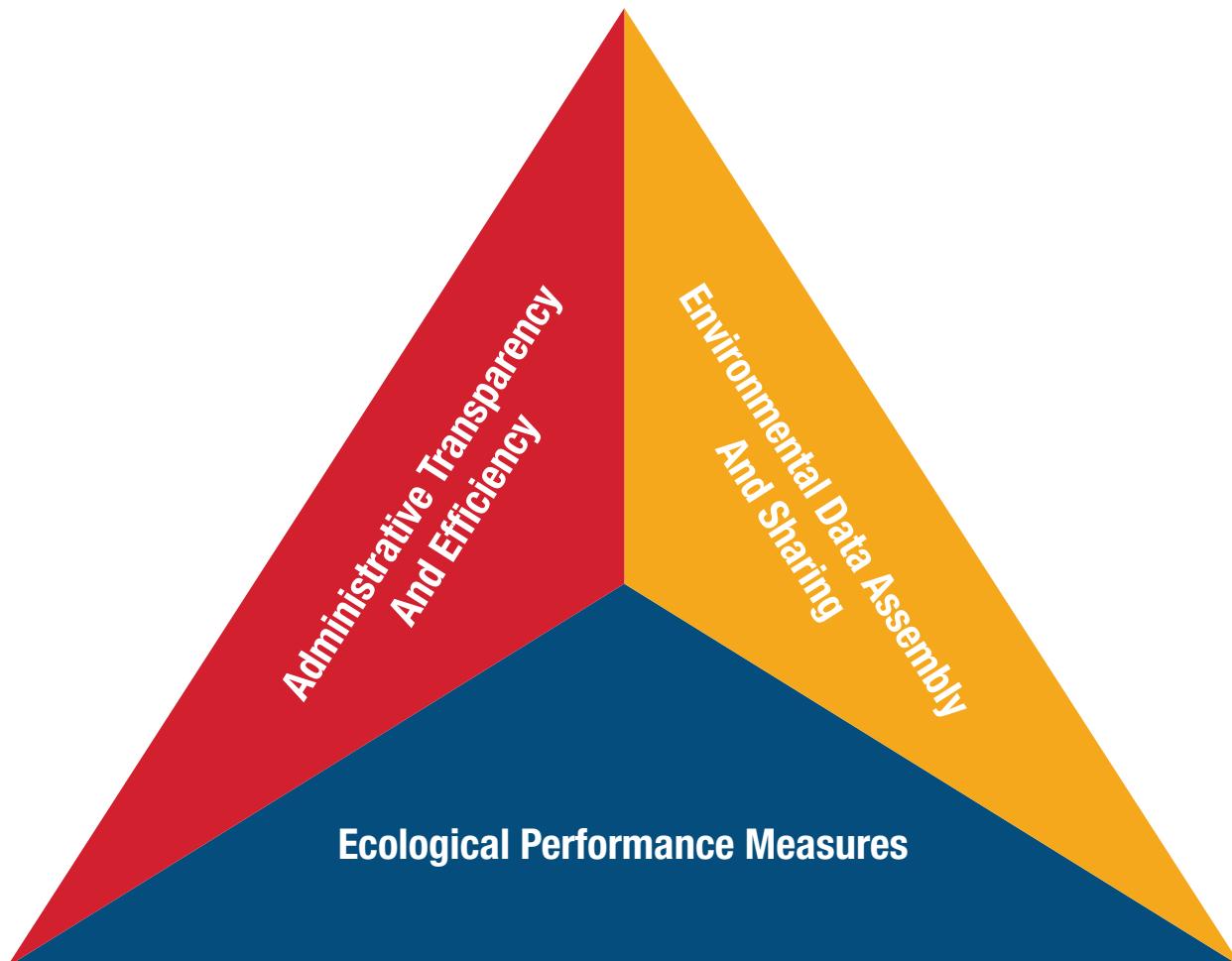


FIGURE 5. THE AB 1492 ACCOUNTABILITY TRIANGLE





Hillsdale

Hillsdale

Opportunities for Further Consideration

Any magical funding sources — or “silver bullets” — for urban forestry funding will almost certainly come in the form of a new fee or tax. And in a political atmosphere that is largely influenced by economics and cash flow, silver bullets are expensive.

Fortunately, CAL FIRE’s Urban and Community Forestry Program is in a very good place. Though no money exists in the coffers right now for anything other than staffing and administration, Governor Brown wants to appropriate \$18 million in cap-and-trade auction revenues to the Program in fiscal year 2014-15. The lumber products tax passed in 2012 specifically highlights urban forestry as an eligible expense. And current water bond discussions now include explicit language including the Urban Forestry Act.

All of this translates into time. If only one of these three statewide prospects, coupled with the annual federal allocation to CAL FIRE, comes to fruition this year, it will provide the program with enough money to support projects on-the-ground, while also supporting essential staff and technical expertise at the department. An added benefit is that any such funding action buys us time. This time is critically needed if other long-term funding solutions are to be explored by CAL FIRE and its stakeholders.

The three-prong test applied to 15 potential funding solutions in Section III revealed a host of challenges in advancing most of them past preliminary consideration. However, of the programs evaluated in this report that have either been successfully explored by other states or have ever been tried in California, three new fees or taxes rise to the top of list. They all have these elements in common:

1. Urban forestry will not blaze the trail. As referenced throughout the report, urban forestry is a small but important issue. When exploring new fees or taxes, the emphasis remains on “small.” Citizen’s initiatives cost millions of dollars to get on the ballot and successfully pass. Legislative campaigns seeking to impose a new tax or fee are also costly far beyond what urban forestry stakeholders can afford. A new fee or tax passed either by the Legislature or voters solely supporting urban forestry is unlikely. Ultimately, the road to success will more likely be achieved through ...
2. Partnerships, partnerships, partnerships. Looking at models both past and present, the most strategic road for urban forestry

is paved with integration into other sector priorities. In the case of park and water bonds, urban forestry is tied to a host of other resource conservation priorities. It has champions like the Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy to help carry the load. Perhaps even more pertinent is the immense support of urban forestry from multiple coalitions that have gathered around the distribution of cap-and-trade auctions revenues. Urban forestry is the only issue supported by natural resources advocates, sustainable communities’ stakeholders and environmental justice groups. This is how urban forestry will most likely see funding in the next state budget. It is how urban forestry can integrate with larger efforts that may emerge to generate new fees or taxes.

3. Patience. For now, urban forestry has time. That time should be used to start developing models for future success based on outcomes that have yet to be fully realized. The next state budget may fund urban forestry at unprecedented levels. The next bond may also contain the Urban Forestry Act. The lumber products tax has yet to realize discretionary revenue, but likely will in the next 12-20 months. Pending legislation and citizen’s initiatives will further inform potential efforts to create new fees or taxes.

The prospects on the immediate horizon should play out before steps are truly taken toward considering these three solutions.

VEHICLE LICENSE FEE/MOTOR VEHICLE MITIGATION FEE

The most likely setback to the possibility of a vehicle license fee (VLF) for urban forestry and other resources is lack of public support. Proposition 21 reinforces this point. Adding to this is the abandonment of a VLF proposal from the California Alliance for Jobs and Transportation in 2013 because of low public support. This is consistent with the trends on VLF related issues. The public tends to be very hostile to increases in fees or taxes on automobiles and ballot measures that attempt to raise them have not been successful.

That hostility presents a challenge for urban forestry. Even if the tax increases are small, will voters support a VLF that funds resources? Is there a will from stakeholders to raise that question again?

Traci Verardo-Torres, Vice President for California State Parks Foundation, said there is no imminent plan to revisit a new version of Proposition 21. She cites initiative costs and the forthcoming findings of the Parks Forward Commission—due for release later in 2014¹—as among the reasons.

A motor vehicle mitigation fee could be revisited at the Legislative level, though some of the questions from the vehicle license fee apply here, too. In particular is the recurring question of nexus: if the public believes mitigation for transportation should stay in transportation, does that translate to vote challenges or conflict with the administration? How do stakeholders respond to the valid question that there are already protocols and processes in place to support urban forestry as a mitigation tool for GHG emissions from vehicles and other sources?

If the proposed citizen’s initiative had been further pursued and passed, another vehicle license fee would be a dead prospect for years to come. Instead, Proposition 21 proponents may find themselves in a place to try again. The best opportunity for urban forestry will be integration into such an effort. Similarly, urban forestry stakeholders need to begin building partnerships and inroads with other groups before attempting another legislative measure on a motor vehicle mitigation impact fee. While a broader representation would almost certainly transform the fee into a tax, the reality is that a two-thirds vote on this type of measure is practically assured under Proposition 26. The upside of being a small part of a potentially powerful coalition outweighs the transformation from a fee to a tax.

REAL ESTATE TRANSFER FEE

Equally enticing and challenging is the prospect of a statewide real estate transfer fee (RETF). If such a fee is pursued, and it could pass constitutional muster, it would likely need the support of housing advocates. Other influential groups seeing their issue areas addressed in such a fee would also need to be a part of it.

Julie Snyder, Policy Director for Housing California, doesn’t rule out the possibility of collaboration. This merger of efforts is more likely to focus on a document recording fee if SB 391 fails². As a partner with the conservation community in defeating efforts to revoke the RETF, Snyder has worked with these groups. She is currently an advocate for urban forestry as part of the Sustainable Communities for All Coalition, which

advocates for cap-and-trade revenues to support SB 375 implementation.

From her perspective, the discussion cannot really start until the fate of Senate Bill 391 is decided. Much like a real estate transfer fee, the proposed document recording fee at the centerpiece of SB 391 is fiercely opposed by the California Association of Realtors (CAR).

Snyder notes that Housing California and the bill's proponents accepted amendments proposed by CAR in 2012 to exempt real estate sales from the recording fee as a way of gaining CAR support. But that was then and this is now.

In 2013, CAR elected to oppose the bill containing the same language as the prior year's effort. CAR has up to \$9 million available to defeat SB 391 – and the measure exempts their issue! Consequently, there is little question CAR would commit all of its resources to defeating a real estate transfer fee. This is solidified in a CAR letter to the Department of Housing and Community Development dated August 22, 2008 that clearly states "CAR would VIGOROUSLY OPPOSE ... transfer fees³."

If SB 391 fails, this will not only be a testament to the power of CAR, but could also be seen as a mandate related to future fees connected to real estate and housing.

If SB 391 passes, it could be under a scenario in which CAR allowed SB 391 to move forward in exchange for a commitment from housing advocates to stay away from future similar fee

efforts. Such a bargain will kill any opportunity for a real estate transfer fee in the foreseeable future. Snyder notes, however, that no such offer from CAR is expected.

OIL SEVERANCE TAX

This proposal has been introduced in the legislature and filed as an initiative several times, but has failed to move in either venue. The oil industry has funded major opposition campaigns that have been successful in defeating each attempt.

The new wrinkle in this story is Tom Steyer, a leading donor in national efforts on climate change. In August 2010, Steyer and his wife joined Warren Buffett, Bill Gates and 37 other American billionaires in pledging to give away at least half their fortunes to worthwhile causes⁴. Steyer says, "the point is that business people are not just laboring for themselves. They have bigger responsibilities and belong to a wider community⁵."

Since 2010, Steyer has led the campaign to defeat Proposition 23 in 2010 (a measure that would have suspended AB 32), and financed Proposition 39 in 2012 that closed a corporate tax loophole and dedicated a portion of the revenue to clean energy projects.

Recently, Steyer announced his support of efforts seeking an oil severance tax in California. He is also willing to back legislation accomplishing it. However, positioning urban forestry to take advantage of an oil severance tax through legislation requires several elements to fall into place.

The political goal behind the oil severance tax is to create enough support for the way the revenue would be spent to offset opposition from the oil industry. Fairness and general tax equity are also part of the argument.

In 2006, an unsuccessful oil severance tax initiative directed most revenue to clean transportation and energy projects. Current legislation carried by Senator Evans gives most of the money to education, with 25 percent for parks. This, too, is not likely to succeed due to heavy and influential opposition.

Any successful oil severance tax essentially becomes a battle between unions and the oil industry. It is one that, in the face of vast new oil revenues from fracking, might be winnable. The key for urban forestry advocates and stakeholder groups is expanding the eligibility of the natural resources component. It needs to address a broader suite of environmental investments that could increase future support.

The most important target is the broader environmental community. The current Evans bill was developed without any real consultation with environmentalists. Starting a dialogue about how to create a more viable bill in the future, in part by broadening the use of revenue, could ultimately serve the interest of urban forestry and build broad local support for more funding. If consensus can be obtained in the environmental community around broadening the funding element, the next step is reaching out to potential authors and prominent backers.

It remains unclear if a long-term campaign backed by Steyer and other climate donors will emerge. Though an oil severance tax is unlikely to pass this year, the measure will provide an opportunity to begin raising the issue of broadening eligibility. Success in modifying the funding targets mentioned in recent legislation could allow urban forestry entry into future bills or initiatives.

¹ Interview with Traci-Verardo Torres; January 2014.

² Interview with Julie Snyder; March 2014.

³ Milton, David K.; Letter from California Association of Realtors to California Department of Housing and Community Development; August 22, 2008.

⁴ "40 billionaires pledge to give away half of wealth." MSNBC. August 5, 2010.

⁵ "Buffett, Gates persuade 38 billionaires to donate half of wealth." The Joplin Globe. AP. August 4, 2010.







Implementing Funding Strategies

PLAN A: CAP-AND-TRADE REVENUES

Based on results culled from the three-prong test (Section III), and further discussions with stakeholders, the single best near-term opportunity to sustain urban forestry at the statewide level is to hitch the tree trailer to the cap-and-trade wagon and never let go. Nearly 100 community groups, statewide nonprofits, practitioners and other advocates support urban forestry as part of the cap-and-trade revenue allocation equation.

Numerous control agencies including the California Air Resources Board and the California Environmental Protection Agency are also supporting urban forestry. Governor Brown recognizes the value of connecting urban forestry with AB 32 goals and objectives by proposing \$18 million in cap-and-trade revenues in the 2014-15 State Budget for it. Urban forestry is one of the least controversial proposals in the Governor's \$850 million spending plan.

Though the Legislature has just started weighing in on the expenditure plan and the full state budget, the urban forestry component is meeting very little resistance. While some committee staff are asking CAL FIRE to supply information regarding how the department will account for greenhouse gas reductions in urban forest projects, the concept of funding urban forestry through cap-and-trade revenues is well received. Assemblymember Nora Campos (D-San Jose) is a very vocal champion for it in Assembly Budget Subcommittee #3 on Resources and Transportation.

It appears advocates and CAL FIRE should be able to make the case to the Legislature for supporting funding for the Urban and Community Forestry Program through 2015. The challenge is sustaining these funds for several years beyond. This is why a long-term funding strategy for securing these fiscal resources is tied to the implementation plan for a no net loss canopy campaign detailed in Section VIII.

POTENTIAL OBSTACLES EXIST

State Senate President Darrell Steinberg was proposing a carbon tax to fund transportation projects while simultaneously removing fuels from under the cap. The effect would be to reduce cap-and-trade revenues by billions over the coming years. Instead, Steinberg has abandoned that effort and replaced it

with a proposal that would capture the bulk of all cap-and-trade revenues in perpetuity, primarily for transportation and transit-oriented development. It is unclear if urban forestry fits in to this plan, and how.

Also competing with urban forestry are groups unhappy with the proposed expenditure plan who have introduced a new round of bills to increase competition for these funds and further complicate the issue.

Most relevant are the endless legal challenges to AB 32 and various legislative efforts to cripple the Global Warming Solutions Act. To date, every legislative effort and lawsuit aimed at derailing AB32 has failed, including 2010's Proposition 23 and its goal of suspending AB 32 implementation. But industry-led efforts to minimize and eliminate AB 32 programs continue to benefit from seemingly endless funding for this purpose coupled with significant political influence. It would only take one successful bill, ballot measure, or legal challenge to either temporarily or permanently stunt the progress and promise of AB 32.

The challenges to AB 32 make it worthwhile to start exploring short-term funding solutions for the Urban and Community Forestry Program. We should consider funding through a combination of other resources before concluding with an implementation plan that merges cap-and-trade money with a statewide canopy campaign.

PLAN B: WATER BOND AND LUMBER PRODUCTS TAX

Bonds have been the most important source of state funding for the Urban and Community Forestry Program, but they do not provide a sustainable long-term revenue stream. However, we cannot ignore water bond and park bond proposals now being considered in the Legislature. These bonds could provide important one-time funding for urban forestry. In this year of serious drought, there is a strong possibility the Legislature may pass a water bond. The two main bills currently under consideration, SB 848 (Wolk) and AB 1331 (Rendon), contain an average of \$1.6 billion each in watershed protection funding. Creating eligibility for funding for urban forestry, or, even better, creating a specific authorization for a level of funding, is important to achieving a short-term funding solution. Stakeholder groups have succeeded in making urban forestry part of the dialogue

by getting the issue inserted into the Assembly bill. However, there is reason to believe the Senate bill could ultimately become the final vehicle for replacing the \$11.1 billion ballot measure.

Only one of these proposals—presuming both include urban forestry—would need to pass to provide CAL FIRE with several years of funding for local assistance grants resembling the model adopted from 2000-2012. The remaining challenge is funding to staff and administer the program and subsequent projects. This is where the lumber products tax comes into play.

Since this report does not take into consideration federal funding for CAL FIRE as a necessity to sustain the Urban and Community Forestry Program, revenues from the lumber products tax should be considered now as a viable backstop. There could be deep cuts in the California allocation of federal urban forestry funds since the 2015 Federal Budget blueprint from President Obama trims the nationwide allocation by 15 percent. An annual appropriation of \$1 million from lumber products tax revenues coupled with bond funding appropriated each year for local assistance grants could support the program until other, more sustainable funding opportunities could be explored.

A FIVE-POINT PLAN FOR THE WATER BOND

The best thing the urban forestry community can do right now in relation to the water bond is "connect the dots" in the minds of decision-makers between water and urban forestry. The main point of resistance in SB 848, for example, is concern about urban forestry not being a "water" issue. Making the case for urban forestry as a way to better manage storm water, capture rainwater, support groundwater recharge and restore urban watersheds is the key to success. It can be achieved by:

1. CONFRONTING THE DROUGHT AND CONNECTING URBAN FORESTRY TO IT AS A SOLUTION.

CAL FIRE and its urban forestry partners, in particular, are in a very strong position to inform decision-makers and the public about the connection between water and trees. As an example, the Pacific Forest Trust, Natural Resources Agency and the UC Davis Information Center for the Environment recently held a briefing at the California Natural Resource Agency Auditorium. The groups looked at concrete steps California can take now to secure future key water sources tied to forests. They focused on the Sierra Nevada, Cascade Mountains and upper Klamath River (Appendix F). The one-hour briefing featured respected scholars

and scientists with about 50 stakeholder and decision makers also present.

The urban forestry community has everything it needs to replicate this successful briefing model for community trees: stakeholder support, successful examples of water-related urban forestry projects from the last 12 years and the science and technical expertise to back a vigorous argument for including urban forestry in the next water bond. CAL FIRE already started down this road when Director Ken Pimlott highlighted the connection between trees and the drought at a press conference for California Arbor Week.

2. SUPPORTING THE PRESENTATION WITH EDUCATION MATERIALS

A useful second step is developing a persuasive document with key data on the clear connections between urban forestry and water that makes the case for urban forestry as a water management and water quality tool. Much like CAL FIRE's Urban Forestry Economics Fact Sheet or California ReLeaf's "Why Trees" Infographic, a one or two-page summary graphically illustrating the connection between water and urban trees could resonate immediately with decision-makers who are in the thick of negotiations.

3. STRATEGICALLY SELECTING THE TARGET AUDIENCE

A successful water bond will need 54 votes in the Assembly, 27 in the Senate and the governor's signature. So while there may be a temptation to begin reaching out broadly to attract more attention and visibility to the issue, time is of the essence. Five key targets should rise to the top:

Authors of the main water bond bills:

Assemblymember Anthony Rendon

(D-Lakewood) Assemblymember Rendon has already amended his bond to create the possibility that some watershed protection funds could be used for urban forestry. Stakeholders are reinforcing this need with his office and are already supporting the measure.

Senator Lois Wolk

(D-San Francisco) Senator Wolk's bill has already passed three policy committees. While amendments are under consideration to include urban forestry, this effort has not been met with success despite Senator Wolk being a champion of urban forestry. A briefing for Senator Wolk from urban forestry stakeholder and community groups in her district could be useful. This should include the Sacramento Tree Foundation, Tree Davis, Sonoma Ecology Center, Benicia Tree Foundation and the UC Davis Arboretum.

Key committee chairs and their staffs:

Senator Fran Pavley

(D-Agoura Hills) Chairs the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee. She can block or support the inclusion of urban forestry in the water bonds. The Senator and her staff are reluctant to include a specific allocation out of fear urban forestry is too unrelated to water priorities. Making the case to her office will be essential, and has already begun, but with mixed results.

Senator Kevin De León

(D-Los Angeles) Chairs of the Senate Appropriations Committee. The next stop for SB 848, and ultimately the place where key amendments are likely to be worked out for both bonds, is the Senate Appropriations Committee. Senator De León has been a supporter of urban forestry and is particularly concerned about disadvantaged communities. Making a strong case to him that investment in urban forestry can improve water management, water quality and quality of life in poorer urban neighborhoods, particularly in Los Angeles, would be very helpful.

Other groups who could bring important support:

The Latino Caucus

The Latino Caucus carries significant weight and votes at the State Capitol. This caucus, if persuaded that urban forestry is an important element of a comprehensive water investment plan and benefits disadvantaged communities, could bring important influence to the issue. This caucus is likely to be the political body or subset that determines whether a water bond is passed this year.

Los Angeles, and/or other local government entities

As bond negotiations heat up, other entities will offer their "must haves." Most water bonds are built around statewide issues of storage, conveyance, etc. Urban centers often have very different priorities. In particular, the larger cities typically review these bonds and determine what needs to be added, coming in late in negotiations with proposed amendments. An outreach effort to cities that have a strong interest in urban forestry could pay off with critical last minute support for this issue.



4. BUILD A BASE OF SUPPORT THAT CAN INFLUENCE DECISION-MAKERS

This process has already begun, though there is more work to be done. Statewide urban forestry groups such as California ReLeaf and the California Urban Forests Council have built a loose coalition. The group includes the Local Government Commission, California Native Plant Society, Trust for Public Land, California Urban Streams Partnership and the American Society of Landscape Architects. While 30 ReLeaf Network groups, the Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land and all the regional forest councils have voiced support for including urban forestry in the water bonds, adding heavy-hitters from the environmental justice community would be especially useful.

5. START LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR LUMBER PRODUCTS TAX REVENUES NOW

The water bond debate will likely be over by the end of June 2014. It should be an immediate priority for CAL FIRE and its urban forestry partners instead of looking ahead to the 2015-16 state budget. Nonetheless, CAL FIRE is in a unique position to start planting the seeds now for funds from the lumber products tax by working directly with the Natural Resources Agency. By showing the Agency that funds could be coming to CAL FIRE through a water bond for local assistance grants, CAL FIRE can demonstrate a proactive approach to solving its funding challenges. CAL FIRE can suggest that some discretionary dollars from the lumber products tax revenues could support facets of the Urban and Community Forestry Program.

If this groundwork begins in 2014, stakeholders and urban forestry advocates will be in a much stronger position to gain support for funding urban forestry through the lumber products tax during the 2015 legislative process.

PLAN C: PARK BOND AND LUMBER PRODUCTS TAX

The other bond option is a park bond. Though the Legislature hasn't passed a park bond since 2001, Senator De León's Senate Bill 1086 already contains urban forestry as a program to be funded. The senator has indicated his intent to build support for the measure that could put it on the ballot in 2014 or 2016. While this measure is being characterized as a back-up in case the water bond is unsuccessful, a park bond has advantages of its own. The major advantage is all the benefits of urban forestry can be used to justify a major allocation of funds within it.

Efforts on the proposed park bond should not be ignored, but must also be grounded



in reality that largely slants in the favor of urban forestry. Senator De León is already a supporter of urban forestry and is including it in his proposed bond.

We believe he may become the next Senate President, assuming the role later in 2014. His legislative consultant staffing the bill is also an urban forestry champion and is responsible for integrating the issue as one of only five priorities highlighted by disadvantaged communities' advocates for cap-and-trade funding.

In light of the drought, and momentum to revise the water bond, it is unlikely the park bond will be approved this year. To make the November 2014 ballot, the measure would have to be approved by the Legislature by August. More likely, the measure will be reintroduced next session for consideration as a 2016 ballot measure.

It cannot be assumed that urban forestry will always be included as a component of the park bond or that the measure will even move out of the Legislature. In order to be successful, the park bond will require building support starting at the grassroots level.

While the water bond should remain the primary focus, this is an opportunity to activate and mobilize a strong local network to educate local governments and community groups for the potential to use the bond as a way to fund urban forestry. As those agencies begin to look at and take positions on the park bond, their support for urban forestry could provide a foundation for an appropriate level of funding. This could then replace water bond dollars if a consensus measure is not reached.

Work done to build support for urban forestry in this year's bill will carry over into next year's effort.

Note the same fiscal challenges about staffing and administration for CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program that come with a water bond also apply to a park bond. Again, CAL FIRE should be laying the foundation now for capturing some lumber products tax revenues in the 2015-16 state budget.