

California ReLeaf

Environmental Scan of Urban Forest Opportunities in California

May 2011

Introduction

Conservation Strategy Group (CSG) assisted California ReLeaf (ReLeaf) in the Environmental Scan of Urban Forest Opportunities in California project, funded by a grant from CALFIRE. As part of this project, CSG assisted ReLeaf in the following activities designed to conduct a comprehensive scan of the opportunities and challenges within California's urban forest community:

- Preparation for and facilitation of two mini-summits at the ReLeaf Retreat and California Urban Forests Council (CAUFC) Conference
- Development and distribution of an online survey
- Summary and analysis of data received, and recommendations for next steps

The mini summits and online survey were designed to receive input from a broad spectrum of people involved in the urban forestry and arboricultural community in California to develop a comprehensive look at local/regional, state, and national education, research, advocacy, and other efforts in urban forestry. The main focus was to identify where gaps or overlap might occur and how to enhance urban forestry efforts for better policy and funding opportunities in the future.

To the extent feasible, feedback received in the mini summits was incorporated into this analysis; however, because the format and questions were slightly different, it was not easily folded into the survey results. The information gathered at the mini summits is provided in Appendices A and B.

The online survey was designed to have open-ended essay style responses, to avoid swaying the results through a multiple choice format. For each question to which it was relevant, the respondent was asked to think about the local, state, and federal level of activities. Respondents were not limited to one answer for each question.

It should also be noted that the results of the Environmental Scan are somewhat skewed given the source of the responses. Most respondents were private or city arborists and members of the Western Chapter International Society of Arboriculture (WCISA). Non-profit organizations were represented mainly through the mini summits and to a certain extent in the online survey.

This report covers a summary of the following:

- Respondents
- Urban Forestry Community
- Non-traditional Partners
- Areas of Expansion
- Public Awareness and Messaging
- Research and Educational Products
- Policy priorities

- Top three gaps/needs
- Additional comments
- Summary of Recommendations

Respondents

The mini summits were held at the California ReLeaf Retreat and the California Urban Forests Council Conference. Attendees at the California ReLeaf Retreat were non-profit organizations, and approximately 30 individuals participated. Attendees at the California Urban Forests Council consisted of a broad spectrum including non profits, professional organizations, municipal arborists, and agency staff. Approximately 15 individuals participated.

The online survey was distributed to the ReLeaf Network, CAUFC outreach list, WCISA, and the CALFIRE Urban Forestry Program and Tree City USA outreach lists. A total number of 409 individuals accessed the online survey; however, an average of about 175 responded to all of the questions.

Most respondents were representatives of cities, either arborists, urban foresters, or other staff at the local municipal level. There were also a large number of professional arborists in the private industry. To a lesser extent, respondents were from non-profit organizations; however, many of them participated in the mini-summits.

Geographic distribution of the respondents was mostly concentrated in the San Francisco Bay Area and southern California. There were some coastal communities represented and some central valley respondents, largely from the greater Sacramento region. There were also a few respondents from rural towns throughout the Sierras.

Respondents*	
Minim summits	45
Online survey respondents	409
Online survey respondents who answered all questions	175
Affiliation	Local government, private foresters, non profits
Geographic representation	Bay Area, Southern CA, Coast, Sacramento Region, valley, sierras

** numbers are approximate and not all respondents are represented in this summary*

The Urban Forest Community

The first question in the survey asked *“Who do you consider or identify with as the urban forestry community in California?”*

The most popular response was local governments or municipal arborists, with the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and the Western Chapter of ISA a close second. Not far behind was the State of

California. Surprisingly, non profits, businesses, and the federal government were very low on the list. CAUFC was fairly well represented and the local non profits; however business community, California ReLeaf, and the federal government, which includes the Center for Urban Forest Research, received the least responses.

It appears there is quite a bit of work to be done here to raise the awareness of the various groups and organizations who contribute to the cause, even within the urban forestry community. Raising this awareness within the community will also improve awareness outside of the community, and thereby help improve how the urban forestry community is able to affect change.

Urban Forestry Community*	
Local governments	70
ISA/WCISA	60
State of CA/CALFIRE	54
CAUFC and Regional Councils	38
Local non profits	44
Business (arborists, horticulturists, landscapers, nurseries)	28
California ReLeaf	25
Federal government (USFS, CUFR)	21
Community members	16
ASCA	10
Other	59

**numbers are approximate; respondents were not limited to one answer; represents a summary of most popular responses*

It likely isn't feasible, or desirable, for any one organization to take on the responsibility of raising awareness of the urban forestry community on its own. It may make sense for ReLeaf, CAUFC, ISA, CALFIRE, and the USFS to team up and work on increasing the visibility of the non profits, business community, and the federal government. Everyone should share in the efforts to make the urban forestry community more familiar with the different groups that contribute to the whole, as well as increasing recognition to the outside world.

Non-traditional Partners

Survey respondents were asked *"Are there non-traditional partners that the urban forestry community should be reaching out to (e.g. environmental justice groups, public health organizations, business groups, etc.)? If, so who and why?"*

The responses received were pretty varied; however, business groups and schools rose to the top with the most interest. Local governments received some interest as well, with local non profits, planners and engineers, professional organizations, and public health falling lower on the list.

Non-traditional Partners*	
Businesses, chambers, real estate, developers	31
Education, schools	29
Community members, HOAs, PTA	21
Local governments, local electeds	20
Local non profits	18
Planners and engineers	14
Professional orgs (CNPA, landscapers, landscape architects, botanists)	13
Public health	13
Other	87

**numbers are approximate; respondents were not limited to one answer; represents a summary of most popular responses*

Based on this collective response, it appears that the business community and schools would be the targeted audiences for the urban forestry community to reach out to and to begin working with more closely. Again, taking a team approach would lighten the load and likely create more beneficial results, so we would recommend ReLeaf and other statewide groups such as CAUFC and WCISA work together to develop outreach and education programs for the business community, schools, and local governments. ReLeaf may have more contacts with schools, likely through the local non-profit members, where CAUFC and WCISA, and others may have more connections to the business and local government community.

We would also recommend ReLeaf, given its statewide role, to develop relationships with Department of Education; local government organizations such as the Local Government Commission, League of Cities, and California State Association of Counties (CSAC); and business chambers in the state. Encourage ReLeaf Network members, CAUFC and WCISA members to conduct outreach within their community to these groups.

Areas of Expansion

The survey aimed to get input on different areas to expand education, outreach, policy, etc. such as public health or economy. Respondents were asked *“Are there areas that the urban forestry community is not actively working in (or could expand in) that it would benefit from (e.g. public health, water quality, job creation, education, etc.)?”*

The highest ranking response was education and schools, followed by public health, water quality, tree maintenance and care, community outreach, and jobs. There was also an emphasis on this being done at the local level.

Areas of Expansion*	
Education	27
Public health	19
Water quality	18
Tree maintenance	17
Community outreach and education	15
Jobs/economy	12
Other	68

**numbers are approximate; respondents were not limited to one answer; represents a summary of most popular responses*

A worthwhile option to consider would be developing a California curriculum-based program for schools to use in science classes at particular grade levels. This could be an effort lead by ReLeaf to develop the curriculum, perhaps along with partners, and then implemented at the local level at school districts and individual schools through local non profits.

Others areas to perhaps focus on building partnerships would be with public health organizations, agencies and non profits working on water quality issues, and businesses and agencies responsible for tree care.

Public Awareness and Messaging

To get a sense of how to better appeal to the public, the respondents were asked “*What public awareness components are missing in the urban forestry messaging?*”

The most popular response was tree care and maintenance, followed by the benefits of trees. Many correlated the two, whereas proper tree care and maintenance, as well as choosing the right tree for the location, affected the benefits the trees provided. A few other popular responses included media; stormwater, water quality, and watersheds; as well as public health.

Public Awareness and Messaging	
Tree care, selection, and placement	55
Benefits and values	40
General education/awareness	27
Media	9
Stormwater, water quality, watershed	9
Public health	8
Other	30

**numbers are approximate; respondents were not limited to one answer; represents a summary of most popular responses*

CAUFC is embarking upon a statewide outreach campaign with a public relations firm. It would benefit the urban forestry community to share the results of this survey with CAUFC so they can be incorporated into their campaign. Encourage CAUFC to focus the campaign on general awareness of the urban forest, and the importance of proper care and maintenance to optimize the benefits urban forests provide. ReLeaf could also focus more on tree selection, placement, and care in its public outreach materials and campaigns as well as the benefits and values of urban forests.

Research and Educational Products

As part of the survey, respondents were asked “What research and educational tools, topics, or products need further examination or clarification (e.g. the role of urban forests in meeting greenhouse gas reduction goals)?”

The two most frequent responses were tree care and maintenance and climate change/carbon credits. The next tier of popular responses was those related water, followed by those pertaining to air quality and volatile organic compounds, public health, and urban heat island effect.

Of course the bulk of urban forestry research is handled by CUFR and others; however, it is always helpful to inform their efforts as well as compliment them with your own programs. Based on we know of the existing research and information, we suspect respondents were expressing the desire for more educational tools on tree care and maintenance. Based on the current state of research on how urban forests relate to climate change and carbon credits, we anticipate the need for more research on this topic; as well as other topics raised, including water quality/stormwater, air quality, public health, and urban heat island effect.

Research & Educational Tools & Products	
Tree care maintenance, new tree species	32
Climate change/carbon credits	29
Water quality, stormwater, reclaimed water	15
Air quality modeling/VOCs	8
Public health	7
Urban heat island effect	7
Other	39

**numbers are approximate; respondents were not limited to one answer; represents a summary of most popular responses*

Once recommendation for ReLeaf is to partner with CAUFC, CUFR, ISA, and others to gather and compile existing educational tools and research products in the areas respondents seemed most interested in and share them through a website portal, CALFIRE, or other options. Although it has been attempted several times, a comprehensive, well organized, easily accessible catalog of existing research and educational tools is still lacking.

ReLeaf should encourage research organizations and projects to focus on climate change and tree care issues. ReLeaf along with partners may also wish to continue supporting funding to CUFR and other research entities and seek out ways to support more research through grants, projects, etc.

Policy Priorities

The survey asked “What policy priorities need to be addressed or put in place?”

The most prominent answer in this section was tree care and protection ordinances. The runner-up was economics; however, it had only 1/3rd of the responses of tree care. Others receiving ten or more responses were funding, and designing or planning for trees.

It is clear here, and there is a trend throughout this survey, that tree maintenance and care is a very high priority for the urban forestry community. In this section, the emphasis is on tree protection policies, standards for tree care, and municipal tree ordinances.

Policy Priorities	
Tree care/ordinances	46
Economics	13
Funding	11
Design space/plans	10
Other	40

**numbers are approximate; respondents were not limited to one answer; represents a summary of most popular responses*

Given the emphasis on tree care and ordinances, ReLeaf may consider encouraging partners like ISA and CAUFC to take the lead on developing a model ordinance and tree care policies to be implemented at the local level. ReLeaf Network members can support this effort at the local level. ReLeaf may consider looking at the potential for some state level policies on tree care as well as how to address the economic benefits of urban forestry at the state level through advocacy and education efforts.

Top three gaps/needs

Respondents were asked *“Please identify your top three gaps or needs of the urban forestry community that are not currently being met (e.g. sustainable funding, public education, media, maintenance/management, political support, etc.)?”*

When requested to prioritize the top three needs, once again, education rose to the top, followed closely by funding and tree care and maintenance. A few other varying responses were received; however, with the exception of identifying political support and media access as priorities, respondents largely agreed upon the top three priorities.

Given this general consensus around the top priorities of the urban forestry community to be education, funding, and tree care; it provides clear direction for ReLeaf and its partners to focus and refine new initiatives and actions in the future.

Top Three Priorities	
Education	95
Sustainable Funding	84
Tree care and Maintenance	75
Political Support	34
Media	18
Other	10

**numbers are approximate; respondents were not limited to one answer; represents a summary of most popular responses*

We recommend that ReLeaf team with its partners to launch education campaigns that raise the awareness of the urban forest, its benefits, and the importance of its proper care. The pursuit of sustainable funding for urban forestry will also require a unified voice and numerous resources from all

members of the urban forestry community to garner the widespread support needed for such an endeavor to be successful.

ReLeaf may consider encouraging CAUFC, ISA, and other partners to initiate and lead efforts to address the needs around tree care and maintenance, with ReLeaf playing a supportive role through a variety of means, especially through the individual Network members at the local level.

Additional comments

Survey respondents were provided a place to add anything additional they would like to share. Below are a few of the responses, which provide a flavor for the additional input provided:

- Share information and success stories
- Focus on a few things and do those well
- Collaborate more
- Youth-schools - education
- United advocacy voice
- Stop preaching to choir
- Cost benefit information
- Maintenance
- Helping protect local arborists and urban forester positions
- More desert research/info.
- Lots of thanks and respect to the State and John Melvin
- Reestablish "state of the urban forest" report every 5 years
- Use social media
- More information on barriers, challenges, etc.

Summary of Recommendations

Urban Forestry Community - Focus on raising awareness of ReLeaf and local non profits. Partner with others to increase the visibility of the business community and the federal government.

Non-traditional Partners - Partner with other urban forestry organizations to develop outreach and education programs for the business community, schools, and local governments. Develop relationships with Department of Education; local government organizations such as the Local Government Commission, League of Cities, and California State Association of Counties (CSAC); and business chambers in the state. Encourage ReLeaf Network members to conduct outreach within their community to these groups.

Areas of Expansion - Consider developing a California curriculum-based program for schools to use in science classes at particular grade levels, perhaps along with partners. Work with Department of Education and other leaders in education. Assist in curriculum implementation at the local level at school districts and individual schools through local non profits. Continue to build partnerships with

public health organizations, agencies and non profits working on water quality issues, and businesses and agencies responsible for tree care.

Public Awareness and Messaging - Partner with CAUFC on their upcoming public education campaign and share the results of this survey. Encourage CAUFC to focus the campaign on general awareness of the urban forest, and the importance of proper care and maintenance to optimize the benefits urban forests provide. In ReLeaf outreach and education materials, focus on tree selection, placement, and care as well as the benefits and values of urban forests.

Research and Educational Products - Partner with other urban forestry organizations to gather and compile existing educational tools and research products and share them through a website portal. Continue supporting funding to CUFR and other research entities and seek out ways to support more research through grants, projects, etc. Encourage the next phase of research endeavors to focus on climate change and carbon credits as well as the importance of tree care and maintenance.

Policy Priorities - Encourage partners in the urban forestry community to develop a model ordinance and tree care policies to be implemented at the local level. ReLeaf Network members can support this effort at the local level. ReLeaf may consider looking at the potential for some state level policies on tree care as well as how to address the economic benefits of urban forestry at the state level through advocacy and education efforts.

Top Three Priorities - Partner with other organizations to launch education campaigns that raise the awareness of the urban forest, its benefits, and the importance of its proper care. Encourage a unified voice and numerous resources to be committed to the development of sustainable funding sources for urban forestry. Encourage CAUFC, ISA, and other partners to lead efforts to address the needs around tree care and maintenance, with ReLeaf playing a supportive role through a variety of means, especially through the individual Network members at the local level.

Appendix A

Input from mini-summit at California ReLeaf Retreat (August 2010)

Summary of Highest Priorities

- Dedicated, permanent, sustainable funding source for urban forestry
- Expand definition of green jobs to include urban forestry
- Better communication between local governments and nonprofits
- Media, outreach and education

Barriers

- Funding barriers - Competing interests, cost/benefit, lack of information, existing sources are difficult to access, politics, need to improve marketing/effective messaging/terminology, LEED currently lacks urban forestry component, appropriate allocation of funds/value/invest in, Cap and Trade?,
- Green jobs – lack of schooling, post high school employment/transition employment, career info. and opportunity, education curriculum

Comprehensive List

- Need communities to promote value of urban forestry, need to get value of trees into the carbon calculator
- Dedicated, permanent, sustainable funding source for urban forestry
- Expand definition of green jobs to include urban forestry
- Incorporate good landscaping practices (urban forestry, edible gardens, etc.) into housing and community development
- Education – schooling in urban forestry
- Influence on nursery industry
- Organizations to rely on air quality benefits of urban forestry, good air quality research, funding for air quality research, funding through transportation groups
- Networking between organizations, sharing of information, one stop shopping for urban forestry resources
- Tap into the public health effort
- Better communication between local governments and nonprofits
- Links between CAUFC, ISA, and CA ReLeaf should be clarified – better coordination
- Media - getting messaging out on benefits, proper care and maintenance
- Plant amnesty and communications to the general public
- Citizen forester/master gardener groups
- Increased education on proper tree care for planning
- Local political enlightenment and support
- Improving nursery stock

- Instilling the joy of trees in communities
- Shift from reactive to proactive
- Green jobs and quality of life
- Inter-departmental communication
- Landscape sustainability
- Ross but budgets delayed maintenance/risk management
- Staffing to support grant writing

Appendix B

Input from mini-summit at CAUFC Conference (November 2010)

Urban Forestry Community

- Sacramento Tree Foundation
- TreePeople
- Friends of the Urban Forest
- CALFIRE
- Victoria Ave. Forever
- City of San Dimas
- City of San Diego
- CCSE
- City of Visalia
- Urban Tree Foundation
- South Coast Air Quality Management District
- National Arbor Day Foundation
- Plant Amnesty

Non-traditional Partners

- Water districts
- UC County extension services
- Horticultural societies
- Coastkeepers
- School Districts/community College
- Flood Control Districts

Gaps/Needs

- Media - getting messaging out on a benefits, proper tree care/maintenance
- Plant amnesty and communications to general public
- Citizen forester/master gardener groups
- Increased education on proper tree care for planting
- Local politician enlightened and support
- Improving nursery stock
- Instilling the joy of trees into communities
- Currently reactive must shift to being proactive
- Green jobs connected to urban forestry along with quality of life

Top Three Needs

- Permanent funding
- Media outreach and education
- “Tree therapy”
- Improving nursery stock
- Inter departmental communication/cross-cut budgets