

Summer 2016

California Trees



The Joy of Jobs

Tree Care Training Program Has Positive Impact on Workforce Development

By Sandy Bonilla

Many trees make light the work -- isn't that how the old saying goes? According to a study commissioned by California State University San Bernardino and the Urban Conservation Corps of the Inland Empire, Southern California Mountains Foundation (CAL GRIP 2013), young adults who participated in a Tree Care Training Program had a significant positive impact on their job and life skills. It also had an impact on how they thought about the environment and their community.

A SMART STRATEGY AND A STRONG START

For more than two years, the Urban Conservation Corps of the Inland Empire partnered with the City of San Bernardino to carry out a state-funded grant program for at risk young adults to increase their life and job skills. The same strategy that was being used for job skills training was then used to form a conservation tree crew that cared for urban

trees in city parks and city owned buildings.

The conservation tree crew included predominately young African American and Latino adults (ranging from age 17-24). The main trainer of this program, a retired city arborist, taught the young people how to professionally prune trees and

how to identify trees that were diseased and/or needed to be sprayed for insects.

GETTING THE JOB DONE

Twice a month, the program participants attended indoor classes on the use of specialize tools to use to prune trees such as pole pruners,



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*California
Trees*

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small chainsaws, as well as other tools used to trim the suckers off the trees such as loppers and shears.

In addition, young people also participated in classroom training to increase their skills for pruning trees over 15 feet, learning tree safety and learning about the tree industry field.

THE NUMBERS DON'T LIE

At the end of the two year project period, over 60 young people went through the Tree Care Training Program. During this time, a pre-post test survey was being developed by the project's evaluator, California State

University, San Bernardino, which concluded that over **80%** of the participants improved their job training skills by over **85%** and increased life skills by **90%**.

Further, **100%** of the participants reported having some obligation for caring for the environment, especially trees. As a result, strategies for job training and life skills building that includes tree care training show a significant impact on workforce and life skills development. ■

Sandy Bonilla is the Director and Co-Founder of the Urban Conservation Corps of the Inland Empire, Southern California Mountains Foundation.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: MAY MARKET REVENUES STALL URBAN FORESTRY FUNDING

By Chuck Mills, Director of Public Policy & Grants

Negotiations among the State Senate, Assembly and Governor on programmatic allocations from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction fund hit a snag this spring when revenue estimates from the May Cap-and-Trade Auction were announced. Predictions of up to \$500 million coming from the May 18th sale were off by about \$490 million, with the state generating \$10 million instead.

This significant shortfall not only impacted the Administration's projection on funds available for the 2016-17 Expenditure Plan, but also raised questions among stakeholders as to what future auctions will produce.

Consequently, the Legislature and Governor did not take action on allocating approximately \$1.4 billion in auction revenues and will revisit this item in late August. All three houses had proposed \$30 million for CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program prior to placing a hold on the overall Expenditure Plan.

Fortunately, the 2016-17 State Budget still contains some good news for urban forestry funding. \$6.7 million is again available for the EEMP in this new fiscal year,

and \$9.3 million was allocated to the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) from Proposition 1 to support a new Urban Rivers Program.

This CNRA program will support green infrastructure projects that conserve water, buffer climate change impacts, improve water quality, water supply, public health, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy demand, and restore and protect rivers, creeks and streams including the acquisition of resource lands. Multiple project examples provided by the CNRA directly support urban forestry.

Priority legislation supported by California ReLeaf was met with mixed results when Appropriations Committees for both houses convened in May. Cap-and-Trade legislation related to disadvantaged communities and transformative climate communities continued to move forward, while Senator Fran Pavley's effort to give CAL FIRE statutory authority to administer grants for tree care and maintenance under the Urban and Community Forestry Program stalled out.

Senate Bill 1386 (Wolk), which memorializes the role of natural and working lands as a key strategy in



meeting the state's greenhouse gas reduction goals, is making its way through the Assembly.

Finally, a proposed park bond introduced by Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia (D – Coachella) was amended to include an unspecified sum for CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program, which will be determined later in August.

All aforementioned bills and budget items will need to be resolved by the last day of August, when the two-year legislative session comes to a close. ■

NETWORK SPOTLIGHT: GROWING TOGETHER

An interview with Mallika Nair, Executive Director of Growing Together

What is the history behind Growing Together?

Growing Together was created in February 2013 to plant fruit trees in urban neighborhoods in order to improve the environment, build community, and create a long term source of local healthy food in neighborhoods classified as “food deserts” that also lack tree cover.

We work with schools and community groups to organize fruit tree plantings, facilitate peace and justice dedication ceremonies, and provide free education workshops for community members on how to steward the urban forest.

Our goal is to empower Oakland youth and community members to reforest their neighborhoods. We do this by providing support and access to resources, plants, and know-how to community members.

What are the three best programs or projects Growing Together currently has to offer?

1. Youth programs: We have a partnership with the Sustainable Urban Design Academy (SUDA) at Castlemont High School in East Oakland, to run in-class workdays on diverse subjects including soil science, mycology, agroforestry, design and seasonal eating. We also run a biweekly afterschool youth apprenticeship program focused on nature connection, youth empowerment, permaculture skills, plant propagation, and healthy eating, which takes place at our on-campus ¼ acre food forest.

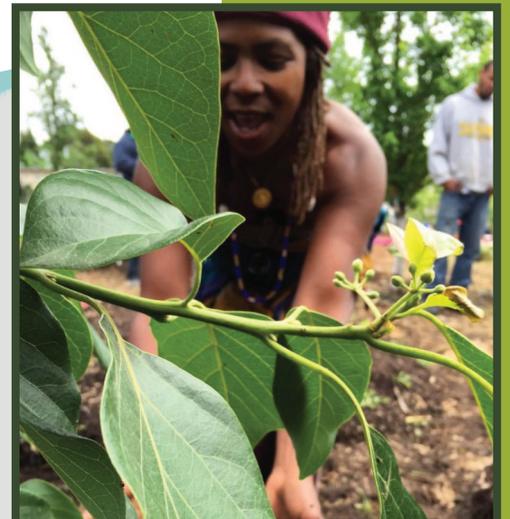
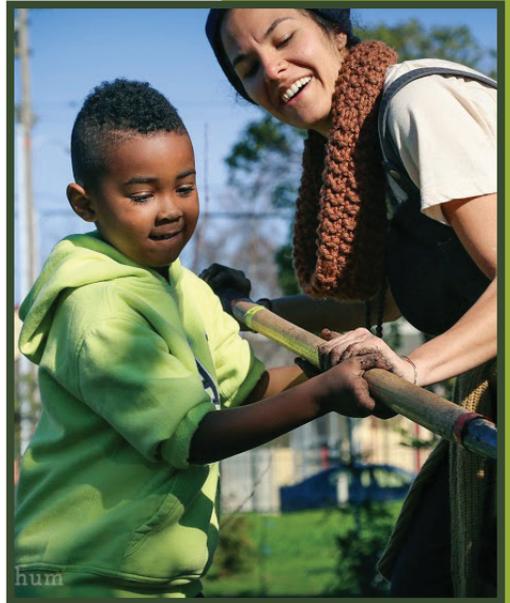
2. Community Tree Plantings: We also run a community tree planting program, where we partner with local community gardens, centers, places of worship, schools etc. to help design plantings, run workshops, and plant fruit trees at their sites around the Oakland area, with a focus on planting at sites that serve low-income communities. We also have a partnership with the North Oakland Restorative Justice Council to offer healing memorial tree plantings and community BBQs for local residents who have lost family members to violence in the neighborhoods.

3. Harvest: We run a harvest program where volunteers glean mature fruit trees located in people’s yards. This program prevents food waste and provides an abundant source of fruit that we can distribute to our school sites and other local nonprofits. We also use the fruit to teach our students about healthy eating, cooking and preserving.

What are you most proud of at Growing Together?

We are most proud of our youth programming, which has grown to serve K-12 at over 12 Oakland public schools and includes outdoor classroom installations alongside the fruit tree installations. Through our youth program, we developed the Castlemont Food Forest and outdoor classroom, and in the spring of 2016, our high school apprentices started to teach at local elementary schools, becoming leaders in their community. Our high school apprentices design and teach workshops to share their new knowledge of fruit trees, other edible and medicinal plants, and the local ecology. ■

Check out a video of Growing Together’s youth in action at vimeo.com/169962020 or at growingtogetherproject.org





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californiareleaf.org/events/power-of-trees/



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