



California ReLeaf

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

*Connecting People, Trees,
and Communities*





We support grassroots efforts and build strategic partnerships that protect, enhance, and grow California's urban and community forests.

Dear Friends of ReLeaf,

Thank you very much for supporting our work helping nonprofits across the state plant and care for urban trees—especially in underserved neighborhoods where trees are needed most.

Fiscal year 2023 was a historic year in terms of funding—\$1.5 billion in federal urban forestry grants were made available through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)—with \$43 million directly allocated to California by the U.S. Forest Service. In addition, California invested \$117 million for Schoolyard Greening—which will add trees and remove asphalt at schools statewide. We were thrilled to see many ReLeaf Network Members apply and be awarded grants via these new programs.

We had a lot to celebrate this year including welcoming nine new Network Member groups, many joining us in Sacramento for our first in-person Network Retreat since 2019! We were also delighted to see many new faces at our Learn Over Lunch Series, where Network members share successes, challenges, and resources to help each other.

California also faced many challenges to our urban forests this year. Climate extremes and weather whiplash are the new reality in our state. As caretakers of our urban forests, we see how extreme heat, extended drought, and powerful winter storms can wreak havoc on our community trees. With these challenges in mind, California ReLeaf prioritized webinars about tree care and management. Our educational sessions included “Budgeting for Tree Care Success” and “Improving Your Planting Program Through Tree Health Monitoring”—with the goal to improve urban forest planting programs and tree survival statistics.

Based on a 2019 Network Retreat panel discussion about tree inventory systems, this past year ReLeaf reviewed how Network members could more easily track and care for the trees they've planted—as well as future trees. After considering the options and conversations with the ReLeaf Board, Network members, CAL FIRE, and the U.S. Forest Service, ReLeaf will soon debut a new online Tree Inventory program for Network Members and grantees to better support urban tree plantings, tree care, and tree survival. We all know we can't simply plant trees and walk away in California's dry climate. The expression “people need trees and trees need people” is incredibly true for our urban forest.

Network organizations will be eligible for a free user account to PlanIT Geo's TreePlotter Inventory software—an online GIS tree management tool. This tool will help Network Members and grantees plan and manage the trees they plant and care for—past, present, and future. We look forward to introducing this new inventory program, providing pass-through grants, and working with you—the champions and caretakers of our urban forests.

With this report, we are proud to share highlights of our programs, grantee project stories, and Network highlights from the past year.

Thank you again for your belief in our mission and your generous support.

Tree Cheers,



Cindy Blain
Executive Director

OUR PROGRAMS



NETWORK

Convening a Network of urban forest nonprofits and CBOs for collaboration and peer-to-peer learning.



GRANTS ADMIN

Seeking and providing grants to local groups to plant and care for trees in their communities.



ADVOCACY

Speaking for trees in state legislation and providing resources for community groups to find their voices.



OUTREACH & ED

Sharing resources and research to support healthy urban forests through local activism.

ReLeaf Network

Strengthening Nonprofits & Community Groups



2023 Network Retreat

Since California ReLeaf's inception in 1989, we have worked to establish and support a coalition of community-based tree groups. Today, the California ReLeaf Network includes over 80 diverse tree nonprofits and community-based organizations all over California who share the vision and dedication to work locally to grow and care for tree canopy in their communities. As a Network, we are stronger together—our diverse experiences help us learn from each other. Through ReLeaf's peer-to-peer learning opportunities, like our educational webinars, Learn Over Lunch series, and our annual Retreat, the Network collaborates to share resources, best practices, successful programs and initiatives, and new innovative ideas to tackle new challenges.

To support these grassroots efforts locally, California ReLeaf advocates for funding at the state level, seeks funding to support our large pass-through grant programs, and works with private sponsors to support our Growing Green Communities and California Arbor Week small grant programs.



2023 Network Retreat



2023 Network Retreat



2023 RELEAF HIGHLIGHTS

Welcomed 9 new Network Members in FY23: Brightheart Foundation, Meadowview Urban Tree Project, The Oaks Ranch, Oswit Land Trust, Pathway to Tomorrow, Save Lafayette Trees, The Student Conservation Association Bay Area Region, United Latinos Promoviendo Acción Cívica, and Watsonville Wetlands Watch.

Hosted three "Learn Over Lunch" sessions: Benicia Tree Foundation shared about their Freeway Tree Planting Program and partnership with the City and CalTrans, Tree San Diego shared their recent report and findings about Tree Planting Challenges in San Diego County, and Friends of the Urban Forest shared about how they approach community engagement bringing hope and joy into their work amidst the climate crisis.

Hosted our annual Network Retreat in Sacramento on May 11, 2023. Over 60 Network Members were in attendance. Six of our Network Member organizations presented and shared their programs spanning from Urban Wood Reutilization, K-12 school tree planting programs to environmental justice and educational initiatives.

In June 2023, we launched our ReLeaf Network Jobs Board which allows Network Members to share career opportunities on our website. It also allows us to stay informed and amplify open positions using our social media channels and e-newsletter.

2023 ReLeaf Grantees & Network Members

California ReLeaf Network Members and grantees span the state from Eureka to San Diego! In FY23 we celebrated nine new organizations joining—making our Network 85 organizations strong.



Photos:
 Food Exploration and Discovery (top)
 L.A. Conservaiton Corps (left)
 & ReLeaf Petaluma (bottom right)

2023 Collective Impact of ReLeaf Network Memebers



Friends of the Urban Forest

The California ReLeaf Network was hard at work in FY23, planting trees, engaging communities, providing jobs, and caring for their community forests. The collective impact of the Network can be felt across the state! Below are the numbers and stories shared by Network Members who completed our Network Impact Survey.

 **TREES PLANTED**
28,715

 **TREES CARED FOR**
152,582

 **VOLUNTEERS**
20,482

 **VOLUNTEER HOURS**
108,587

 **INTERSHIPS PROVIDED**
224

 **HOURS OF JOB TRAINING**
345,573

 **TREES PLANTED IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES**
9,378

 **SQ FT OF CONCRETE REMOVED**
49,754

 **PEOPLE REACHED DURING EVENTS**
17,491



Canopy



North East Trees



Save Our Forest



2023 NETWORK MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Canopy: In the fall of 2022, Canopy partnered with the Arbor Day Foundation and La Scuola International School in the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park. They planted 12 trees along the perimeter of the campus. On Earth Day 2023, Canopy education staff came back to the campus providing tree care and educational programming to students about the newly planted trees.

North East Trees: In 2023, North East Trees and their partners, held an Arbor Day event in South Central Los Angeles. They planted nearly 1,000 street trees and public housing trees in that neighborhood!

ReLeaf Petaluma: ReLeaf Petaluma completed their first planting season in 2022-2023. They engaged over 200 volunteers and planted 596 trees! They have been working closely with the City of Petaluma in planning and coordinating tree irrigation needs to ensure the watering and survival of all new and future city trees.

Save Our Forest / Fallbrook Land Conservancy: In the spring of 2023, Save Our Forest coordinated a Treescape Care Project to help clear weeds and care for trees along a busy four block promenade that connects two shopping centers in North and South Fallbrook. 62 volunteers participated clearing weeds and caring for the trees along the pathway.

Tree Lodi: Tree Lodi has partnered with the City of Lodi Electric Utility for the past two years to provide free shade trees to residents. In the first two years, all 1,000 available trees were reserved within several weeks after utility customers received information about the program in their monthly statements. "We were amazed at the response," Tree Lodi President Steve Dutra said. "We appreciate Lodi Electric's participation and the hard work of our Shade Tree Program team."

Treecovery Grantee Story: Climate Action Now!

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



With the highest urban pollution rates in San Francisco, the Bayview neighborhood has historically experienced longstanding industrial pollution, red-lining, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, saw higher unemployment rates. Because of these many challenges, Climate Action Now! (CAN!) a nonprofit environmental education and ecological restoration organization based in San Francisco chose this neighborhood for its Treecovery Project.

Treecovery grant funding allowed CAN! to invest in Bayview's community and green infrastructure. Their primary goal was to grow a new "ecological corridor" cared for by Bayview community members and partner organizations. CAN! and their partners removed concrete and planted trees and community gardens along sidewalks and within schoolyards to mitigate pollution and to support public health.

To launch this project, CAN! partnered with the City of San Francisco, Charles Dew Elementary, and Mission Science Workshop—a bilingual science center that provides inspiring hands-on education programs. CAN! engaged many new volunteers through outreach at Charles Dew Elementary and coordinated educational programming with youth during school hours and weekend community work days with Mission Science Workshop staff and volunteers. Hundreds of students, dozens of families, and neighbors surrounding the school participated in community work days, planting trees surrounding the school campus, in the schoolyard, and along city streets. With the City's

partnership, street tree wells on the sidewalks surrounding the school were expanded, improving basins for tree and garden habitats.

Despite the challenges of vandalism while working along Bayview city streets, CAN! has planted over 88 trees to grow Bayview's "ecological corridors." This project has helped expand the Bayview tree canopy to not only help with air pollution but also to build biodiversity, capture carbon, and bring green spaces to a community that has historically been underserved and is working to build back stronger after the pandemic.



California ReLeaf's Treecovery Grant was funded through California Climate Investments and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), Urban and Community Forestry Program.



PASS-THROUGH GRANTS

Helping Create Climate Resilient Communities



Your Children's Trees


Building community resilience against the impacts of climate change is vital. ReLeaf's pass-through grant programs support grassroots climate adaptation initiatives, with a focus on low-income and low-shade neighborhoods. With the rise of extreme heat events, the lack of shade trees in these communities poses health and safety risks. It is essential to prioritize tree planting and tree care projects in these areas. Trees can offer many benefits such as sequestering carbon, promoting the local economy, reducing violent crime, and improving public health, living conditions, and tourism.

Most of the pass-through grants we receive are funded by California's Cap and Trade program. This program has specific targets for greenhouse gas sequestration, which we aim to meet. At the same time, we also focus on maximizing the co-benefits of planting trees in the communities they are planted—helping communities with their individual needs in building climate resiliency.

2023 PUBLICLY FUNDED GRANT BENEFITS

The data values listed below are 40-year project lifetime benefits of the trees planted by our publicly funded grantees in FY23.

 **1,447**
TREES PLANTED

 **4,220**
METRIC TONS
OF CO₂ CAPTURED

 **28,600,000**
GALLONS OF STORMWATER
INTERCEPTED

 **1,154,100 kWh**
OF ENERGY CONSERVED

 **103,031 LBS**
OF AIR POLLUTANTS REDUCED
including O₃, NO₂, SO₂, VOC, & PM_{2.5}.



2023 RELEAF HIGHLIGHTS

Distributed \$50,000 of grant funds to 10 California Arbor Week grantees in Southern California for tree planting celebrations in their communities through the sponsorship of Edison International and with the ongoing support of CAL FIRE and the U.S. Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Programs. These "intro" grants are intended to nurture community groups new to tree planting and care projects.

Closed our "Relief through ReLeaf" (RTR) and our Urban Forest Management (UFM) Grant Programs in the winter of 2023. These pass-through grants were made possible through CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program and California Proposition 68 funding.

Distributed \$40,000 of grant funds to eight Growing Green Communities grantees in Central and Northern California for tree planting and care projects through the sponsorship of Pacific Gas & Electric Company as well as the ongoing support of CAL FIRE and U.S. Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Programs. These incubator grants support new community groups plan and fund tree planting and tree care projects.

Continued to work with our Treecovery subgrantees who are working to finalize their projects in 2023. Treecovery grants are funded through California Climate Investment and CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry program. Three of our 18 grantees projects are highlighted in this report.

Engaging New Urban Forest Champions



ReLeaf Petaluma

A thriving urban forest requires an engaged community that cares about and cares for urban trees. California ReLeaf is committed to allocating some of our educational outreach and grants toward engaging new active groups in urban tree planting. We provide technical assistance to groups during the application, implementation, and reporting phases in order to reduce any barriers that may exist. One way we cultivate new groups is through our California Arbor Week and Growing Green Communities Small Grant Programs—a simplified application process with straightforward deliverables that help “incubate” new groups in coordinating urban tree planting projects and

help them grow their skills in community engagement, project management, tree planting, and tree care. We firmly believe that grassroots voices and leadership are essential in developing a canopy that not only survives but also thrives, building climate-resilient communities.

At the Capitol, we establish strategic partnerships with groups that focus on natural resources, climate justice, racial justice, economic justice, job training, public health, and more. Urban trees have a significant impact on a wide range of interconnected issues, and we seek out new partners wherever we can—helping these groups understand the value of urban forests.



2023 RELEAF HIGHLIGHTS

Hosted two educational webinars – *Tree Care Through Establishment in October 2022 and Improving Your Planting Program Through Tree Health Monitoring in January 2023.*

Coordinated the Arbor Week Youth Poster Contest engaging kids across the state. Our 2023 theme, “Trees Plant a Cooler Future,” received over 200 entries from young artists and tree heroes all over California. The 2023 contest was sponsored by Blue Shield of California.

Advocated for improved government contracting legislation for nonprofits by joining the California Government Coalition with the California Association of Nonprofits, which led to the development of the California Nonprofit Equity Initiative—seven bills that were taken to the California legislature to strengthen nonprofits’ essential partnership with the State of California and our mutual efforts to deliver the highest quality service to the people of California.

Launched a survey for the California Urban and Community Forestry Economic Impacts Study to gather current data on the contributions of urban forestry enterprises in California’s economy in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, CAL FIRE, and our team of researchers at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, North Carolina State University, and Virginia Tech.



ARBOR WEEK POSTER CONTEST WINNERS



Arbor Week Press Conference in Oakland

Treecovery Grantee Story: Butte Environmental Council

CHICO, OROVILLE, AND ORLAND, CALIFORNIA

During the past five years, communities in Butte, Glenn, and Tehama counties have experienced ecological and economic impacts from major wildfires and floods. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these communities experienced higher unemployment rates, further impacting the region.

Butte Environmental Council (BEC), a regional nonprofit dedicated to environmental stewardship and education, is using California ReLeaf's Treecovery pass-through grant funding to expand their Trees PLEASE (Planting Literacy in Environmental Action & Stewardship Education) Program, which aims to expand tree canopy in low-income areas most impacted by regional economic and ecological impacts and providing inspirational hands-on learning opportunities for youth in these communities.

BEC's Trees PLEASE program focused on tree planting in shared public spaces like schools and parks in low-income neighborhoods. They built strategic partnerships with cities and school districts in Chico, Orland, and Oroville. BEC prioritized bringing their program to Title I Schools in the region, which have, on average, between 35-60% of all enrolled students facing poverty at home. Through Trees PLEASE, students learn tree planting fundamentals by engaging with BEC staff and volunteers and then help get trees in the ground on their campuses while learning the important role of our urban forests in keeping our communities strong and healthy.

As many research studies have shown, schoolyard greening improves students' mental health, academic achievement, and environmental literacy. Through the Trees PLEASE program, over 70 trees have been planted on nine school campuses which have benefited students as well as campus-wide climate resilience.



“Through the Trees PLEASE program, over 70 trees have been planted on nine school campuses which have benefited students as well as campus-wide climate resilience.”



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Treecovery Grantee Story: Woodland Tree Foundation

WOODLAND, CALIFORNIA



In response to the pandemic, California ReLeaf initiated the “Treecovery” grant program to provide resources to help nonprofits and community-based organizations green communities and build back better after the unprecedented economic and social impacts of COVID-19.

Treecovery grantee Woodland Tree Foundation focused on building partnerships throughout the community to plant over 150 trees in low-income neighborhoods and public spaces that needed additional shade and tree canopy for the health and well-being of its residents. As an all-volunteer-operated nonprofit, Woodland Tree Foundation collaborated and expanded its capacity by leveraging key partnerships.

Working with the City of Woodland, Woodland Tree Foundation identified “red zones” or city-owned parking lots that exacerbate the heat island effect in the downtown, as well as under-canopied neighborhoods that need additional street and residential trees. With grant funding, they removed concrete and planted 22 trees, helping provide shade in two city parking lots to mitigate heat in the downtown. In partnership with Sacramento Valley Conservation Corps (SVCC) and the City of Woodland, Woodland Tree Foundation increased the capacity of its Free Shade Tree Program. Bilingual SVCC interns canvassed door to door in low-shade neighborhoods—especially in low-income farmworker communities, signing up 32 residents for the Free Shade Tree Program.

Collaborating with the local school district and conservation nonprofit Tuleyome enabled Woodland Tree Foundation to expand its youth engagement programs. Over 20 Woodland

High School students were recruited to lead tree plantings on their campus while receiving urban forestry training. In their partnership with Tuleyome, the grant helped fund tree planting along a new ADA trail as well as educational programs for children and families at Woodland Regional Park—a former landfill being restored and developed into a park. Volunteers engaged new community members in the importance of conservation and their work to “re-oak” native trees and plants at the park and throughout their community.



California ReLeaf’s Treecovery Grant was funded through California Climate Investments and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), Urban and Community Forestry Program.





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BACK COVER IMAGE:

2023 Arbor Week Poster Contest Winner
 Thematic Award
 Youth Artist: Gillian Lee, age 12

FY2023 Expenses

\$1,527,539



79% GRANTS
8% OUTREACH & ED
9% MANAGEMENT
4% NETWORK
1% ADVOCACY



Gillian Lee



2115 J Street, Ste. 213, Sacramento, CA 95816
(916) 497-0034 • CaliforniaReLeaf.org