

SAN FRANCISCO URBAN FORESTRY COUNCIL



ANNUAL URBAN FOREST REPORT

JULY 1, 2010-JUNE 30, 2011

Submitted to Mayor Edwin M. Lee and the Board of Supervisors by the Department of the Environment, pursuant to San Francisco Environment Code Chapter 12 Sec. 1209.

The Urban Forestry Council was established to promote a healthy and sustainable urban forest that benefits all San Franciscans while ensuring public health and safety. Council members represent a range of urban forest stakeholders, including city agencies, non-profit organizations, tree management organizations, and community members.

San Francisco Urban Forestry Council Members:

Maria D’Agostino (Chair) - Industry Professional Representative

Rose Hillson (Vice-Chair) - Community Representative

Larry Costello - Community/At-Large Representative

Dan Flanagan - Nonprofit Organization Representative

Malcolm Hillan - Educational Organization Representative

Sandy Sherwin - Nonprofit Organization Representative

Andrew J. Sullivan - Community Representative

Megan Sutherland - Industry Professional Representative

Kelaine Vargas - Industry Professional Representative

Chris Buck - SF Dept. of Public Works Representative

Dan Sider - SF Planning Department Representative

Mike Barrow - SF Public Utilities Commission Representative

Stanley Muraoka - SF Redevelopment Agency Representative

Vacant Seats:

SF Recreation and Parks Department

Golden Gate National Recreation Area

San Francisco Urban Forestry Council Staff:

Mei Ling Hui - Urban Forestry Council Coordinator

Monica Fish - Commission Secretary

Overview of San Francisco's Urban Forest, FY 2010-211

One of the tasks of San Francisco's Urban Forestry Council is to provide an annual report on the state of the urban forest. To this end, we surveyed 24 agencies involved with trees in San Francisco. We received responses from 20 agencies ranging from those directly involved in planting and caring for trees to state organizations that fund urban forest related projects or that support local tree advocacy groups. (For a complete list of groups see Appendix I, and for tables of the questions and responses see Appendix II.) While this report seeks to be as comprehensive as possible, it is based on data provided by responding agencies and does not include complete information on all urban forestry work within the City.

The goals of the report are as follows:

- To determine the resources used to support the urban forest (funding and labor).
- To track the priorities, needs, and concerns of the agencies, and monitor how they change over time.
- To better understand threats to the future well-being of our urban forest.
- To find ways to increase the contributions that trees provide to our community.

In the fiscal year 2010-2011, 2,753 trees were planted and 1,011 were removed, for a net gain of 1,742. The groups most active in tree planting were Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF), the Department of Public Works (DPW), and the Recreation and Parks Department (RPD). City agencies also cared for 31,315 trees (pruning, inspection, watering), with the same three groups as well as the Port of San Francisco and PG&E being most active in tree care.

San Francisco agencies reported approximately 125 staff positions that dedicate a portion of their time to urban forest programs, and of these staff positions, approximately 67 are dedicated to planting and maintaining trees. Additional contractor and volunteer time was engaged by city agencies and non-profits for tree maintenance.

Responding agencies had a combined dedicated forestry-related budget of \$9.3M, of which \$6.9M was spent on tree planting and tree care. Additional funding for staffing hours was spent on tree management, which is not identified separately from broader organizational landscaping budgets and not included in the \$9.3M figure. These totals only include work performed on trees that are within public jurisdiction.

When asked about issues of concern to the urban forest, most managers emphasized lack of staff and funding for ongoing maintenance of trees. Budget shortfalls and the inability to provide adequate care to trees have resulted in a significant change in DPW policy this year. The department proposes to transfer maintenance responsibility for approximately 24,000 trees to fronting property owners over a seven-year period. Private property owners are currently responsible for the maintenance of approximately 65,000 street trees in San Francisco.

Concerns have been expressed that transferring tree care responsibilities is potentially harmful to the long-term viability of the urban forest. The UFC urges the Mayor and Board of Supervisors to identify sustainable funding mechanisms to ensure that San Francisco's urban forest remains safe and healthy, and that it continues to provide significant social, economic and ecological benefits.

Major opportunities and challenges reported by participating organizations

Management of San Francisco's urban forest is divided among many stakeholders who provide direct care to trees within land under their jurisdiction, as well as nonprofit organizations who engage with agency partners to support forestry activities on city-owned land.

City College of San Francisco (CCSF) is highly concerned with their inability to adequately care for trees within their campuses. They lack funding to ensure proper maintenance is performed and are unable to sufficiently address issues caused by disease and storm events. They are highly concerned with staffing and funding constraints, loss of trees due to age and disease, loss of trees related to development, and the low prioritization of forestry programs.

The **Department of Public Works (DPW)** faced additional budget cuts to their arborist crews of \$330K, which resulted in the loss of two arborist technician positions. The continuing lack of stable funding for both planting and maintenance of trees will result in the Department transferring the maintenance responsibility of approximately 24K trees to adjacent property owners. While two-thirds of sidewalk trees are already the maintenance responsibility of adjacent property owners, DPW is concerned that trees may not be properly maintained.

Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF) is concerned with overall care of street trees. Studies have shown that the average street tree mortality rates in urban areas are between 3.2% and 4% – or an annual total loss of approximately 4,000 street trees in San Francisco. In light of this, the 335 street trees planted by DPW, along with the 1000+ planted by FUF, are not enough to ensure stability of the street tree population. FUF is highly concerned with the cuts to DPW's budget for tree care and their relinquishment of trees to property owners. Though FUF understands that DPW had no choice when faced with chronic underfunding and staffing reductions, they believe this is a disastrous move for the health and growth of San Francisco's urban forest.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) encourages customers to plant low-growing tree species beneath power lines to ensure safety of high voltage lines. PG&E offers educational resources that can be found at pge.com/trees. PG&E noted concerns including difficulty in safely pruning trees near cars and the potential hazards trees pose to the electric facilities after car-caused damage.

The **Port of San Francisco (PORT)** began collecting tree inventory data this year, including GPS coordinates, trunk and canopy size, tree basin size, and images of each tree. They also identified and scheduled plantings for empty street tree wells within their jurisdiction. The Port lost 16 total trees this year, four of which were palms affected by Fusarium wilt. They are highly concerned with any future loss of the valuable palms that line the Embarcadero, as the replacement cost of each tree is \$30-\$40K.

The **Recreation and Parks Department (RPD)** is concerned with securing adequate resources for programmatic maintenance of the estimated 131K trees on the 4196 acres of parkland that they manage. RPD Urban Forestry program staffing continues to decline due to inability to fill position vacancies. Additionally, RPD has continuing concerns with the death and loss of trees within their parklands due to pine pitch canker.

The **San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH)** has many facilities with on-site trees, though the General Hospital Facility was the only site to respond to this year's survey. Many trees have been stressed or removed due to the construction of the new hospital. These issues will continue until the project is complete and a final landscape plan is in place. Until then, their gardeners report they will focus on functionality and care of remaining green spaces.

The **San Francisco Housing Authority (SFHA)** entered into a maintenance agreement with DPW to provide project-based tree care services, including inventory, planting, care, and removal work. In addition to this MOU, SFHA also utilizes the services of private contractors and non-arborist Housing Authority staff.

The **San Francisco International Airport (SFO)** is the only reporting agency that is consistently satisfied with funding, staffing, and prioritization of forestry programs within their agency. They note their highest concern is the prioritization of forestry programs within the city at large. While they currently have adequate resources to meet their tree management needs, as their trees mature, they will need to increase maintenance activities, and the associated budget.

The **San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA)** reports concerns with inefficiencies in forestry programs city-wide. SFMTA is required to maintain landscaping to comply with outside regulatory agencies. Sometimes these areas are within the jurisdiction of other city agencies. Occasionally, this creates management difficulties in coordinating SFMTA operational needs within the limitations of other agencies. For example, SFMTA needs to schedule tree work during hours that they can reduce public transportation services. IF the tree maintenance work is under the jurisdiction of another agency, that agency may not have available staff during SFMTA's optimal timeframe.

The **San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC)** underwent a restructuring of their forestry programs, with a significant portion of the budget and management responsibilities reassigned to the Natural Resources Lands Management Division. SFPUC continues to be concerned with resource constraints that affect their ability to provide adequate care to new and established trees.

The **San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA)** maintains trees through various general landscape contracts and is concerned with their ability to provide long-term tree maintenance and providing adequate care to established trees. The City and County of San Francisco will take over maintenance of the Redevelopment Agency trees in future years.

San Francisco State University's (SFSU) Site Planning Director reports staffing and funding constraints and concerns with significant tree loss related to age and diseases, along with inability to provide care to established trees. SFSU expressed interest in a replanting plan that will result in a reduction to infrastructure damage from trees, reduce the risk of tree failures, improve the survival rate of newly planted trees, and increase bird habitat.

The **Treasure Island Development Authority's (TIDA)** redevelopment plan calls for new street and streetscape improvements, including street tree planting and removal. Investment in urban forestry programs is limited due to the upcoming implementation of the area redevelopment plan.

The **University of California, San Francisco (UCSF)** is concerned with the health of the trees within their ageing forest as well as how state-wide budgetary constraints may affect this campus.

In addition to the agencies and organizations that provide direct services through management or oversight of portions of the urban forest, several organizations responding to this year's survey support local urban forestry programming through policy, technical assistance, or funding, without directly overseeing or managing city trees. These organizations contributed just over \$1M (12%) to the overall urban forestry programming budget within the City and County of San Francisco.

The **California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection** (CalFIRE) engages with municipalities through providing technical assistance and funding for local projects. In fiscal year 2010, they awarded \$182K to San Francisco nonprofits to support the care and management of San Francisco's trees. The agency is currently interested in increasing the capacity of the Urban Forest Map, implementing Urban Wood Utilization programs and the creation of sustainable business models that utilize urban wood as a resource rather than waste. CalFire is also interested in positioning urban forest resources within climate adaptation strategies.

The **San Francisco Planning Department** (Planning) received a grant of \$250K from Cal Fire to produce an update to the urban forest master plan and conduct a sample tree inventory. Planning additionally worked with FUF to plant street trees and install sidewalk landscaping on blocks adjacent to Cesar Chavez Street through a \$200K grant from the US EPA.

California ReLeaf provided \$379K grant funding to local nonprofits for tree planting and maintenance in this fiscal year. ReLeaf commends San Francisco for being the most prominent politically progressive major metropolitan area in the state of California. They rely on San Francisco partners for support in their endeavors to advance communication, education, and training among their members, as well as engaging in national level issues, such as the 2012 Farm Bill. This year, they officially recognized Arbor Week, advocated for the successful volunteer exemption bill (AB 587), produce their annual conference, and provided funding to various programs.

The **California Urban Forest Council** is a statewide non-profit comprised of diverse membership that advocates for the best possible urban forests in California, oversees Bay Area Forest Council funding and programs. They will be launching the "Invest from the Ground Up" campaign shortly, which will have statewide influence and will supply resources for regional council members use.

The **California Urban Forest Advisory Council** makes recommendations to CalFire on urban forestry matters. Their feedback affects statewide programming which in turn impacts San Francisco urban forestry programming. While a role for local organizations has not yet been defined, a member of this Council also serves on the San Francisco Urban Forestry Council and will facilitate future collaborative opportunities.

Appendix I: List of Participating Agencies

The following agencies responded to the survey:

- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire)
- California ReLeaf
- California Urban Forest Council
- California Urban Forestry Advisory Council
- City College of San Francisco (CCSF)
- Department of Public Works (DPW)
- Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF)
- Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E)
- The Port of San Francisco (PORT)
- The Recreation and Parks Department (RPD)
- San Francisco Department of Public Health, General Hospital (SFDPH)
- San Francisco Housing Authority (SFHA)
- San Francisco International Airport (SFO)
- San Francisco Municipal Transit Authority (SFMTA)
- San Francisco Planning Department (Planning)
- San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Natural Areas Division (SFPUC)
- San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA)
- San Francisco State University (SFSU)
- Treasure Island Development Authority (TIDA)
- University of California, San Francisco (UCSF)

The following organizations and agencies did not respond:

- A Living Library
- Golden Gate National Recreation Area
- Presidio Trust
- San Francisco Unified School District

Appendix II: Responses from the 2011 Annual Urban Forest Report Survey

Table 1: Respondents were asked about staffing and budget:

Agency/ Organization	Urban forest- related staff positions	# Staff (or FTE) working only on planting, care, and removal of trees	What is your total organization/ agency budget?	What is your urban forestry related budget?	Est. % of UF budget spent on tree planting, care, and removal	
					Amount	%
CCSF	0	0	UKN	\$10K	10K	100%
DPW	59	29	\$7.3M	\$4.1M	\$1.85M	45%
FUF	13.5	4.5	\$1.6 M	\$1.3M	\$1.3M	100%
PG&E	1**	UKN*	UKN	UKN**	UKN	UKN
PORT	2	.1	\$66M	\$14K	\$14K	100%
RPD	29	29	\$127.8M	\$3.5M	\$3.5M	100%
SFDPH	2.5	0	\$900K	\$15K	15K	100%
SFHA	0	0	\$13M	0	0	0
SFO	10	UKN*	UKN	\$50K	\$50K	100%
SFMTA	3*	> 0.5	\$780.5K	\$18.8K	UKN**	UKN**
SFPUC	1	1	UKN	UKN**	UKN**	UKN**
SFRA	0	0	\$286.1M	UKN**	UKN**	UKN**
SFSU	2.1	2	\$8M	\$130K	\$120K	92%
TIDA	1	1	\$8.1M	\$160K	\$32K	20%
UCSF	1	> 1	\$38M	UKN**	UKN**	UKN**
TOTAL:	125.1	67.1 FTE+	\$557.7M+	\$9.3M+	\$6.9M+	

*Agency utilized services of contractors or agency including forestry maintenance within work plans of staff that had additional duties. Staffing levels are unknown.

**Budget for forestry related work included in broader landscaping or maintenance budgets. Exact amounts unknown.

Table 2: Respondents were asked about work plans:

Agency	How many trees within your agency have been:			Did your agency work for another agency?	Did another agency work for your agency?
	Planted	Cared for	Removed		
CCSF	UKN	12-15	5	No	Yes, RPD
DPW	335*	9603	147**	Yes, PUC	Yes, FUF
FUF	1060	3792	0	Yes	No
PG&E	UKN	~2,500	UKN	No	Yes, Contractors
PORT	9	1644	5	No	Yes, DPW
RPD	1119	657	491	Yes, PUC, CCSF, DPH	Yes, Contractors
SFDPH	0	12	30-40	No	Yes, Contractors
SFHA	0	0	0	No	Yes, DPW and Contractors
SFO	~ 200	~2,500	3	Yes, Caltrans	No
SFMTA	0	19	2	No	Yes, DPW and Contractors
SFPUC	20	UKN	200	No	Yes, RPD and DPW
SFRA	UKN	UKN	UKN	No	Yes, Contractors
SFSU	UKN	2,000	70	No	Yes, Contractors
TIDA	0	1075	25	No	Yes, Contractor
UCSF	10	~ 7,500	28	No	Yes, FUF and Contractors
Approximate Totals:	2,753	31,315	1,011	4 Yes, 11 No	13 Yes, 2 No

* DPW additionally issued permits to private property owners to plant 660 trees. Of these, 239 were new trees and 421 replaced trees that were permitted for removal. These trees are not included in the total number of trees planted.

** DPW additionally issued permits to private property owners to remove 515 trees. Of these, 421 were replanted and 94 were not. These trees are not included in the total number of trees removed.

Table 3: Respondents were asked to rate the urban forest-related concerns on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being “not significant” and 5 being “extremely significant”

Agency	Inability to provide adequate care to newly planted trees	Inability to provide adequate care to established trees	Inefficiencies in the way forestry programs operate on a city-wide basis	Loss of significant numbers of trees due to age and/or disease	Loss of significant numbers of trees due to vandalism, illegal pruning, and/or illegal removal	Loss of significant numbers of trees due to development
CCSF	5	5	3	5	1	5
DPW	3	4	3	3	5	4
FUF	1	4	2	5	3	4
PORT	4	3	3	5	3	1
RPD	5	5	2	5	5	3
SFDPH	2	5	5	3	3	5
SFO	2	2		1	1	1
SFMTA	2	2	4	2	1	1
SFPUC	5	5	3	5	2	1
SFRA	2	4	3	2	1	1
SFSU	1	5	1	5	1	3
TIDA	2	2	2	5	3	
UCSF	2	2	3	5	4	2
TOTAL	36	48	34	51	33	31
AVERAGED TOTAL	2.8	3.7	2.6	4	2.5	2.4

The San Francisco Housing Authority and Pacific Gas and Electric Company did not supply responses.

Table 4: Respondents were asked to rate the areas of concern that were limiting their ability to excel on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being “not significant” and 5 being "extremely significant”

Agency	Funding constraints	Staffing constraints	Prioritization of urban forestry programs within your agency/the city at large	Lack of coordinated efforts to protect and manage the overall urban forest	Lack of tree inventory	Lack of management plan
CCSF	5	5	5	2	3	3
DPW	5	5	4	3	3	5
FUF	3	2	1	5	4	1
PORT	5	5	4	5	1	3
RPD	5	5	5	3	3	3
SFDPH	3	4	5	5	3	4
SFO	1	2	3	2	3	2
SFMTA	3	5	4	3	2	2
SFPUC	5	5	3	2	2	2
SFRA	4	1	2	4	2	1
SFSU	5	5	3	1	1	1
TIDA	2	2	4	2	2	1
UCSF	5	5	2	4	2	2
TOTAL	51	51	45	41	31	30
AVERAGED TOTAL	4	4	3.5	3.1	2.4	2.3

The San Francisco Housing Authority and Pacific Gas and Electric Company did not supply responses.