

# **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.

# PICTURE OF THE UFC

## San Francisco Urban Forestry Council Members, from left to right

**Maria D'Agostino (Chair), add affiliations?**

**Rose Hillson (Vice-Chair),**

**Larry Costello,**

**Dan Flanagan,**

**Malcolm Hillan,**

**Sandy Sherwin,**

**Andrew J. Sullivan,**

**Megan Sutherland,**

**Kelaine Vargas,**

**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,

### **Vacant Seats:**

**SF Recreation and Parks Department**

**Golden Gate National Recreation Area**

**Mei Ling Hui**, Urban Forestry Council Coordinator,

**Monica Fish**, Commission Secretary

## **Overview of San Francisco's Urban Forest, FY 2011**

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 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, 2,487 trees were planted and 868 were removed, for a net gain of 1,619. The groups most active in tree planting were Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF), the Department of Public Works (DPW), and the Recreations and Parks Department (RPD). City agencies also cared for 33,314 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 already responsible for the maintenance of approximately 65,000 trees in San Francisco and the transfer plan will provide a more equitable allocation of tree maintenance responsibility and align DPW's assets with its resources. Many agencies express concerns that transferring tree care responsibilities is potentially harmful to the long-term viability of the urban forest, and are urging the Mayor and Board of Supervisors to seek 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 San Francisco **Department of Public Health (DPH)** 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 **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. While there were a reported 1,324 street tree removals, they estimate street tree mortality rates to be 4% – or an annual total loss of over 4,000 trees. In light of this, the 350 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.

The San Francisco **Housing Authority (HA)** 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 **Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA)** 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.

**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](http://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 San Francisco **Public Utilities Commission (PUC)** 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 (RA)** 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. SFRA is additionally

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.

**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 express interest in a replanting plan that will result in a reduction to infrastructure damage from trees, reduce risk from tree failures, improved survivability of newly planted trees, and an increase bird habitat.

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** 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 Forests 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:

- Department of Public Works (DPW)
- Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF)
- Pacific Gas and Electric
- The Port Authority (PORT)
- The Recreation and Parks Department (RPD)
- San Francisco International Airport (SFO)
- San Francisco Redevelopment Agency
- San Francisco State University (SFSU)
- The University of California in San Francisco (UCSF)
- Treasure Island Development Authority (TIDA)
- The Municipal Transit Authority (MTA)
- City College of San Francisco (CCSF)
- Public Utilities Commission Natural Areas Division (PUC)
- San Francisco Housing Authority
- Department of Public Health: General Hospital was the only responding facility (DPH)
- The California Department of Forestry and Fire (CalFire)
- California Urban Forest Council
- California Urban Forestry Advisory Council
- California ReLeaf
- The Planning Department (Planning)

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%
DPH - General	2.5	0	\$900K	\$15K	15K	100%
DPW	59	29	\$7.3M	\$4.1M	\$1.85M	45%
FUF	13.5	4.5	\$1.6 M	\$1.3M	\$1.3M	100%
HA	0	0	\$13M	0	0	0
MTA	3*	> 0.5	\$780.5K	\$18.8K	UKN**	UKN**
PG&E	1**	UKN*	UKN	UKN**	UKN	UKN
PORT	2	.1	\$66M	\$14K	\$14K	100%
PUC	1	1	UKN	UKN**	UKN**	UKN**
RA	0	0	\$286.1M	UKN**	UKN**	UKN**
RPD	29	29	\$127.8M	\$3.5M	\$3.5M	100%
SFO	10	UKN*	UKN	\$50K	\$50K	100%
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		
*DPW	335	**9603	147	Yes -PUC	Yes, FUF
FUF	1060	3792	0	Yes	No
PG&E		~2,500		No	Yes, Contractors
PORT	9	1644	5	No	Yes, DPW
RPD	1033	657	430	PUC, CCSF, DPH	Yes, Contractors
SFO	~ 20	~2,500	3	Yes, Caltrans	No
SFRA	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	No.	Yes, Contractors
SFSU		2,000		No	Yes, Contractors
UCSF	10	~ 7,500	21	No	Yes, FUF and Contractors
TIDA		1075	25	No	Yes, Contractor
SFMTA		19	2	No	Yes, DPW and Contractors
CCSF		12-15	5	No	Yes, RPD
PUC	20	Unknown	200	No	Yes, RPD and DPW
SFHA	0	0	0	No	Yes, DPW and Contractors
DPH - General		12	30-40	No	Yes, Contractors
Approximate Totals:	2,487	31,314	868	4 Yes, 11 No	13 Yes, 2 No

\*In addition to the work performed in house, DPW issued permits to plant 660 trees (239 new trees, and 421 replacement trees), and to remove 515 trees, (421 were replaced and 94 were not replaced).

\*\* 4529 trees were pruned, 5074 trees were watered to establish

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"

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Inability to provide adequate care to newly planted trees</b>	<b>Inability to provide adequate care to established trees</b>	<b>Inefficiencies in the way forestry programs operate on a city-wide basis</b>	<b>Loss of significant numbers of trees due to age and/or disease</b>	<b>Loss of significant numbers of trees due to vandalism, illegal pruning, and/or illegal removal</b>	<b>Loss of significant numbers of trees due to development</b>
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
SFO	2	2		1	1	1
SFRA	2	4	3	2	1	1
SFSU	1	5	1	5	1	3
SFUSD	5	5	4	5	3	1
UCSF	2	2	3	5	4	2
TIDA	2	2	2	5	3	
SFMTA	2	2	4	2	1	1
CCSF	5	5	3	5	1	5
SFPUC	5	5	3	5	2	1
SFDPH - General	2	5	5	3	3	5
TOTAL:	41	53	38	56	36	32
	2.9	3.7	2.7	4	2.6	2.3

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
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
SFO	1	2	3	2	3	2
SFRA	4	1	2	4	2	1
SFSU	5	5	3	1	1	1
SFUSD	5	5	1	4	1	5
UCSF	5	5	2	4	2	2
TIDA	2	2	4	2	2	1
SFMTA	3	5	4	3	2	2
CCSF	5	5	5	2	3	3
SFPUC	5	5	3	2	2	2
DPH - General	3	4	5	5	3	4
TOTAL:	56	56	46	45	32	35
	4	4	3.3	3.2	2.3	2.5