

ANNUAL URBAN FOREST REPORT

JULY 1, 2011-JUNE 30, 2012



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

Overview of San Francisco's Urban Forest, FY 201-212

SF Environment staff surveyed 19 city departments and non-government organizations that oversee or manage a portion of the urban forest in San Francisco. Departments were queried on forestry budget, resources, and maintenance activities for fiscal year 2011-2012. Of the 19 organization surveyed 13 provided full or partial responses.

This data is tracked to:

- To better understand the resources used to maintain the urban forest across city departments.
- To track the priorities, needs, and concerns of city departments and local nonprofits, 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 fiscal year 2011-2012, reporting organizations **planted 3,760 trees** and **removed 723 trees**, compared to the previous year where 2,753 trees were planted and 1,011 trees were removed.

Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF), the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Recreation and Park Department (RPD), and the Presidio Trust (Trust) had the most active tree planting programs. City agencies and nonprofits **provided maintenance to 15,943 trees**. The same four organizations as well as San Francisco International Airport (SFO) and Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) were the most active in tree care.

San Francisco agencies reported approximately **121 staff positions that dedicate a portion of their time to urban forest programs**. Of these staff positions, approximately **76 staff only work on planting and maintaining trees**. While this is generally on par with the previous year's reporting, individual department responses are not consistent year-to-year. Comparing programming of the most active and consistently responsive departments and organizations:

- Friends of the Urban Forest decreased overall staff that spend a portion of their time on forestry maintenance activities to **7.5 FTE this year from last year's 13.5 FTE** and increased staff that only work on trees to **7.5 FTE this year from last year's 3.5 FTE**.
- The Recreation and Park Department **reduced forestry program staff to 25 FTE down from 29 FTE in last year's report**.
- The Department of Public Works had the greatest staffing reduction; **reducing staff to 41 FTE from the previous year's 59 FTE. DPW also reduced staff that only work on trees to 26 FTE from 29 FTE in last year's report**.

Together, **DPW and RPD reduced overall forestry staffing by 22 full-time positions, a 25% total staff reduction**. Forestry specific staff was reduced by 3 FTE, a 5% staff reduction.

Consistent with earlier reports, departments and agencies identified staffing constraints as their greatest limitation, followed closely by funding constraints. Additionally, the loss of trees due to age and/or disease and inability to provide adequate care for newly planted trees were the most significant concerns for forestry managers.

List of Participating Agencies

The following organizations and city departments responded to the survey:

- Department of Public Health, General Hospital (DPH)
- Department of Public Works (DPW)
- Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF)
- Municipal Transit Authority (MTA)
- Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E)
- Port of San Francisco (PORT)
- Presidio Trust (Trust)
- Public Utilities Commission, City Distribution Division (PUC)
- Recreation and Park Department (RPD)
- San Francisco International Airport (SFO)
- San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)
- Treasure Island Development Authority (TIDA)
- University of California, San Francisco (UCSF)

The following organizations and departments were queried and did not respond:

- A Living Library
- City College of San Francisco
- Golden Gate National Recreation Area
- Department of Public Health, Laguna Honda Hospital
- San Francisco Housing Authority
- San Francisco State University

Please note: 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 performed within the City of San Francisco.

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.

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. The hospital continues to report concern with the health and upkeep of trees on this site.

The **Department of Public Works** (DPW) began transferring maintenance responsibility of trees they formerly maintained to the adjacent property owners. This is a result of budget cuts and a continuing lack of stable funding for their arborist crews, which they have reported for several years. DPW continues to be concerned with the lack of funding, long-term financing for tree care, and public response to tree maintenance transfer. They additionally note that illegal pruning is a very serious concern, which results in a loss of structural integrity even if the tree survives.

Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF) provides an estimated mortality rate of 4000 street trees per year and an estimated 2,350 street trees planted per year. They are concerned that funding cuts have reduced the number of trees planted by the city and point to a need to increase tree planting levels to ensure that the city is not losing tree canopy coverage. Additionally, FUF is concerned with budget cuts that have led to DPW's relinquishment of tree care. FUF believes that while DPW has no choice due to chronic budget cuts, it is a disastrous move for the health and growth of the San Franciscan Urban Forest. FUF identifies a need to improve the overall care of street trees, noting poor pruning practices that result in damage to trees. Additionally, FUF is concerned with future funding to maintain their programs.

The **San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency** (MTA) reports concerns with community interface regarding how the agency should care for trees within their jurisdiction, along with a lack of adequate resources and complications related to hiring competent tree specialists.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) identified public safety and service reliability issues related to the inability to effectively prune palm trees growing near power lines, the 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) worked with the Department of Public Works and contracted a specialist to diagnose and recommend a plan to replace the dead palms and to care for the remaining palms along the Embarcadero. Based on DPW's recommendation, the Port replanted 4 palms and implemented the treatment plan for the remaining palms. They are highly concerned with any future loss of these palms, due to the significant replacement cost of approximately \$30K per tree.

The **Presidio Trust** (Trust) oversees approximately 70,000 trees in San Francisco, with over 10,000 trees under active management. Their greatest concern is the age and vitality of the Presidio's Historic Forest.

The **San Francisco Public Utilities Commission** (PUC) transferred their forester position from the City Distribution Division to the Natural Resources Lands Management Division. The CDD expressed concern that there is no concomitant requirement to perform former Forester's functions within the city and county.

The **Recreation and Park Department (RPD)** expressed continuing concern with loss of staff and adequate resources for programmatic maintenance of their estimated 131,000 trees. In previous years, RPD noted that Urban Forestry program staffing continued to decline due to inability to fill position vacancies.

The **San Francisco International Airport (SFO)** is in the process of performing a comprehensive tree inventory to prioritize operations and project future needs. They performed soil testing to mitigate health issues with some plantings and are focused on healthy soil management, moving towards an organic-based fertilizer program. As their urban forest matures, maintenance of trees around freeway ramps and buildings will increase. They are primarily concerned with the logistics of performing these operations around heavily-trafficked areas.

The **San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)** has doubled the number of organizations planting trees within their jurisdiction, while their budget for equipment and personnel has not increased. Their greatest concerns are related to inappropriate species selection, how existing trees may be affected by climate change, and how these issues coupled together may result in property damage and create public safety issues. SFUSD appreciates the efforts of their gardeners and contractors, while noting that their lack of forester staff positions is a significant constraint.

The **Treasure Island Development Authority (TIDA)** expresses concern about tree health and the need for better pre-identification and removal of diseased trees.

The **University of California, San Francisco (UCSF)** continues to report concerns with the health of their aging forest and budgetary constraints.

Responses from the 2011 Annual Urban Forest Report Survey

Table 1: Respondents were asked about staffing and budget:

Department	Urban forest-related staff positions	# Staff (or FTE equiv) performing only forestry work	Total department budget	Urban forestry related budget	Est. % of UF budget spent on tree planting, care, and removal	
					Amount	%
DPH	2.5	0*	\$1M	~\$25K	\$10K	40%
DPW	41	26	\$162.5M	\$5.5M	\$2.2M	40%
FUF	7.5 FTE	7.5 FTE	\$1.7M	\$947K	\$947K	100%
MTA	3	0	no answer	~\$200K	~\$20K	~10%
PG&E	1	5*	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
PORT	2	0	\$66.3M	\$167K	\$30K	18%
Trust	10	10	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
PUC	0	0	unknown	0	unknown	100%
RPD	25	25	\$127.8M Operations Budget	\$3.5M	\$3.5M	100%
SFO	16	1.6 FTE*	no answer	\$85K	\$35K	41%
SFUSD	10	0*	\$1M	\$60K	\$60K	100%
TIDA	2	0*	~\$8.3M	~\$824K	~\$24.7K	~3%
UCSF	1	less than 1*	\$8 million	~\$100K	~\$100K	100%
TOTAL:	121 FTE	~76 FTE	\$376.6M	\$11.4M	\$6.9M	60.5%

*Department utilized services of contractors and/or included forestry work within non-forestry specific staff workloads. For these departments, there may be additional unknown staffing hours and/or equivalent FTE staffing hours are estimated.

Table 2: Respondents were asked about work plans:

Depart.	How many trees within the department's purview were:			Work the department performed for others:	Work other departments performed for the departments or org:
	Planted	Cared for	Removed		
DPH	6	400	0	None	DPW cared for 20 trees and removed 2
DPW	923	3,155	201	PUC contracted care of ~75 trees and removal of ~20 trees. SFHA contracted care of ~200 trees and removal of ~35 trees.	None
FUF	1170	2,795	0	None	None
MTA	6	41	0	None	Private contractors pruned 35 trees.
PG&E	0	~2,000	29	None	Private contractors performed forestry inspection work and work noted on left.
PORT	6	30+	8	None	DPW planted 4 trees and removed 6 trees.
Trust	500	~4,600*	120	None	None
PUC	0	unknown	~ 20		RPD performed forestry management services. Totals provided not provided.
RPD	817	572	276	PUC contracted forestry management services. Totals not provided.	Private contractors planted 218 trees, cared for 66 trees, and removed 443 trees.**
SFO	~ 150	2,600	5	CalTrans contracted planting of 100 trees and care of 400 trees.	Private contractors removed 5 trees.
SFUSD	100	500	40	None	Nonprofits, community groups, and Private contractors planted 50 trees, cared for 740 trees, and removed 70 trees.
TIDA	0	0	0	None	DPW cared for ~200 trees and removed ~65 trees. Private contractors cared for ~500 trees.
UCSF	82	~250	24	None	Private contractors planted 82 trees, cared for ~150 trees, and removed 22 trees.
Totals:	3,760 trees	15,943 trees	723 trees	3 Departments performed work for other departments	10 Departments contracted forestry services

*Note: 3,600 trees are under active Reforestation Management. Care activities associated with these trees may be atypical for other agencies or may represent work not typically included in other agency responses.

**Note: additional tree planting to replace these hazardous removals will occur in FY12-13

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

Department	Loss of significant numbers of trees due to age and/or disease	Inability to provide adequate care to established trees	Inefficiencies in the way forestry programs operate on a city-wide basis	Inability to provide adequate care to newly planted trees	Loss of significant numbers of trees due to development	Loss of significant numbers of trees due to vandalism, illegal pruning, and/or illegal removal
DPH	2	2	4	1	4	1
DPW	4	5	4	2	4	4*
FUF	4	5	4	3	2	4
MTA	3	4	4	2	1	1
PG&E	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
PORT	5	3	2	3	4	1
Trust	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
PUC	5	5	2	4	1	1
RPD	5	5	4	2	1	5
SFO	1	2	n/a	1	1	1
SFUSD	4	5	3	5	4	1
TIDA	5	3	1	1	1	1
UCSF	5	2	3	2	2	4
TOTAL	43	41	31	26	25	24
AVERAGED TOTAL	3.9	3.7	3.1	2.4	2.3	2.2

*Note from DPW: While trees are not always lost when they are pruned illegally, it is a very serious concern due to loss of structural integrity if the tree survives

Table 4: Respondents were asked commonly cited limitations that affect their forestry programming on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being “not significant” and 5 being "extremely significant”

Department	Staffing constraints	Funding constraints	Lack of coordinated efforts to protect and manage the overall urban forest	Lack of management plan	Prioritization of urban forestry programs within your agency/the city at large	Lack of tree inventory
DPH	3	3	4	4	3	2
DPW	5	5	2	3	2	3
FUF	1	5	5	5	1	5
MTA	5	3	3	4	5	1
PG&E	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
PORT	5	1	4	3	4	1
Trust	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
PUC	5	5	5	5	5	5
RPD	5	5	3	3	4	2
SFO	2	1	1	2	2	1
SFUSD	5	5	4	4	2	1
TIDA	1	3	1	1	2	3
UCSF	5	5	4	2	2	2
TOTAL	42	41	36	36	32	26
AVERAGED TOTAL	3.8	3.7	3.3	3.3	2.9	2.4