



**PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 8, 2021**

**THE USDA FOREST SERVICE, CAL FIRE,**

**CALIFORNIA RELEAF, AND PARTNERS HONOR CALIFORNIA ARBOR WEEK 2021**

**Sacramento, California** – The USDA Forest Service, California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection, and California ReLeaf welcome the support and sponsorship of Edison International San Diego Gas & Electric, and Northrop Grumman to celebrate 2021 California Arbor Week, March 7-14, 2021, in this important annual celebration of the importance of trees for all Californians in all neighborhoods.

A virtual press conference will be streamed on the CAL FIRE Facebook page at 10:05 a.m. today to honor California Arbor Week and the Arbor Week grantees as well as unveil the winners of the annual art contest. Speakers will include representatives from CAL FIRE, the Forest Service, Edison International, and San Diego Gas & Electric. The press conference will be posted online during California Arbor Week.

This year \$75,000 in Arbor Week program funding by Edison International and \$15,000 by San Diego Gas & Electric will support a total of \$60,000 in California Arbor Week grants as well as technical support to community-based organizations and nonprofits in Southern California new to planting trees in their towns. Northrop Grumman sponsors the California Arbor Week Art Contest for schoolchildren.

The Forest Service and CAL FIRE actively support community tree planting in urban areas throughout California with support for education and grants, with special emphasis placed on neighborhoods with low tree canopy.

“We are proud to again support the California Arbor Week program that provides urban tree education to young Californians about the many benefits trees provide for communities and the environment as well as tree planting grants to community groups,” said Regional Forester Randy Moore, USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region. “This program helps schoolchildren and community members learn that urban trees connect us all to nature, are a critical component to human health, encourage physical activity, and promote social ties to the community.”

“This past year has shown us the tremendous importance of the urban forests and having access to outdoor spaces with trees,” said Chief Thom Porter, CAL FIRE Director and California’s State Forester. “CAL FIRE is committed to ensuring all Californian’s have access to the benefits of trees; benefits like storing carbon, cleaning the air, and providing cooling shade and beauty to the urban landscape. CAL FIRE proudly supports the efforts of our partners and community members across California who work to increase the footprint of urban forests,” said Chief Porter.

“With COVID-19, it has been a very challenging year for small grassroots tree groups so that they can stay strong and continue to plant trees. Everyone has been very creative and flexible in shifting to fewer and smaller tree planting events, more remote educational events, and more tree care which can be done individually or in very small groups. Staying safe and being respectful of everyone’s stressors and boundaries around COVID has been a top priority for ReLeaf,” said Cindy Blain, Executive Director of California ReLeaf.

Trees are always critical to human health and well-being, and this has been confirmed as people deal with the disruption and anxiety of COVID. The Centers for Disease Control and many health care professionals strongly encourage everyone to get outside and enjoy nature in parks and their backyards for their mental and physical well-being...and of course trees are the overarching champions of nature.

“At SCE, our thoughts remain with those suffering hardships resulting from the COVID-19 crisis,” said Caroline Choi, senior vice president, Corporate Affairs for Edison International and Southern California Edison. “These challenging times demand that we as a company be more resourceful in how we partner with communities. SCE’s support for California ReLeaf’s Arbor Week grants, which sponsor outdoor, COVID-safe tree planting projects, is one way we continue engaging the communities we serve – keeping our commitment to these communities and to fighting climate change as well.”

“SDG&E is proud to support California ReLeaf’s efforts to empower local grassroots organizations to plant more trees and protect our community forests,” said John Jenkins, vice president of electric system operations at SDG&E. “We are continuing our commitment to environmental stewardship through our management and inspection of nearly half a million trees in our service territory, and our purposeful efforts to inform customers about the safety and environmental benefits of the ‘right tree, right place’ program.”

#### **Media Notes:**

Media are able to access additional photos and information here:

<https://calfire.box.com/s/eg4dm8lkimihaa1jg5rjnkda2pj8216t>

The virtual press conference can be accessed from the CAL FIRE Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/CALFIRE>

**USDA Forest Service:** The USDA Forest Service manages 18 National Forests in the Pacific Southwest Region, which encompasses over 20 million acres across California, and assists state and private forest landowners in California, Hawaii and the U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands. Furthermore, the State and Private Forestry division in the Region reaches across the boundaries of National Forests to states, tribes, communities, and non-industrial private landowners. It is the federal leader in providing technical and financial assistance to landowners and resource managers to help sustain the forests and grasslands, parks, and street trees.

**California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection:** As part of the department’s mission, CAL FIRE is charged with protecting California’s forests by maintaining the sustainability of the state’s natural resources including both urban and wildland forests. CAL FIRE is encouraging everyone to be a part of California Arbor Week by planting a tree. It’s important that you carefully plan before you plant a tree to ensure that your tree is drought tolerant and properly placed to avoid growing into power lines, buildings or other infrastructure. Get more planting tips on the CAL FIRE website at [www.fire.ca.gov](http://www.fire.ca.gov).

**California ReLeaf’s** mission is to empower grassroots efforts and build strategic partnerships that preserve, protect, and enhance California’s urban and community forests. California Arbor Week runs March 7 - 14 each year. For more on all California ReLeaf’s statewide urban forest community development program, please visit <http://californiareleaf.org/>

**San Diego Gas & Electric:**

SDG&E is an innovative San Diego-based energy company that provides clean, safe and reliable energy to better the lives of the people it serves in San Diego and southern Orange counties. The company is committed to creating a sustainable future by providing its electricity from renewable sources; modernizing natural gas pipelines; accelerating the adoption of electric vehicles; supporting numerous non-profit partners; and, investing in innovative technologies to ensure the reliable operation of the region’s infrastructure for generations to come. SDG&E is a subsidiary of Sempra Energy (NYSE: SRE). For more information, visit [SDGNews.com](http://SDGNews.com) or connect with SDG&E on Twitter ([@SDGE](https://twitter.com/SDGE)), Instagram ([@SDGE](https://www.instagram.com/SDGE)) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/SDGE).

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