

URBAN WOOD, A PASSAGEWAY TO A MEANINGFUL CAREER

In an innovative effort to combat climate change and equip young individuals with essential skills for the future, the Conservation Corps of Long Beach (CCLB) received a California Climate Investments grant worth \$999,735. Administered through CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program, this grant funded the project Urban Wood, A Passageway to a Meaningful Career. The initiative aims to transform hazardous trees removed throughout the City of Long Beach into valuable urban lumber, diverting them from waste and providing corps members with valuable training opportunities.

Under the coordination of the City's Public Works Department, hazardous trees scattered across Long Beach have been skillfully transformed into urban lumber at a newly established processing facility. The driving force behind this program is Dan Knapp, the Executive Director of CCLB, who highlights the organization's commitment to youth development and preparing participants for the ever-evolving workforce. "As a youth development organization, we're always looking for inventive ways to better prepare our corps members for the future workforce," Knapp states. "This program not only trains our participants for a future in a growing industry, but it also helps bolster the resiliency of our urban forest and address climate change."

The heart of this initiative lies in the urban wood recovery apprenticeship program, where corps members receive comprehensive training in the removal of hazardous trees, delimiting processes, and transportation techniques. West Coast Arborists (WCA), a leading authority in arboriculture, partnered with CCLB to impart their expertise and teach corps members the art of processing wood into valuable urban lumber. With the potential to serve as a model for similar programs across the state, this apprenticeship training program opens pathways to promising careers for young individuals.

Furthermore, the program goes beyond training by aiming to improve the living conditions of disadvantaged neighborhoods, where most corps members reside. As part of this initiative, CCLB has planted and is maintaining 2,000 drought-tolerant trees throughout these Long Beach neighborhoods, combating poor air quality, lack of urban green space, and enhancing stormwater retention.

Feedback from program participants has been overwhelmingly positive. Sarah Marquez, a CCLB corps member, shares her experience, stating, "I love the program! I'm learning so much about the importance of a healthy urban forest, and I get the opportunity to learn how to use all kinds of awesome equipment. I'm an Urban Lumberjack!" Marquez's testimony highlights the profound impact this initiative has on the lives of young individuals, empowering them with skills, knowledge, and a sense of purpose.

Beyond its immediate benefits, this project tackles a multitude of environmental challenges faced by the City of Long Beach. By effectively removing hazardous trees, the program contributes to controlling insect infestations and diseases that pose a threat to the urban forest. Additionally, diverting woody biomass from landfills not only reduces waste but also helps sequester carbon in the wood, preventing the release of greenhouse gases. The restoration efforts extend further with the replacement of removed trees, effectively mitigating issues such as poor air quality, lack of urban green spaces, and stormwater retention.

For more information on this project, click [HERE](#)

More information on CAL FIRE's support for urban wood and urban forestry across California can be found [HERE](#)

