



**Los Angeles**  
Center for Urban Natural  
Resources Sustainability  
**Rooted in Research**



## **Strategic Plan 2019 – 2028**





## WHO WE ARE

The Los Angeles Center for Urban Natural Resources Sustainability ("LA Urban Center") operates through a partnership among the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region and Research Station and the City of Los Angeles (City Plants and Recreation and Parks). Joining in this collaboration are the many Federal, State, and local government partners as well as academia, industry, private, and non-profit organizations concerned with urban natural resources and socioecological resilience. These partners work jointly to oversee the LA Urban Center through our overarching vision and mission. The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to outline the LA Urban Center's direction and priorities. For up to date information on our program and resources please visit our website:

**[laurbanresearchcenter.org](http://laurbanresearchcenter.org)**



## VISION

Improved and enhanced urban natural resources and quality of life throughout the Los Angeles metropolitan area, from urban to rural communities.



## MISSION

To serve as an information and research destination hub that fosters collaboration, generates new science, delivers information and technology to aid application, and engages diverse communities and knowledge bases through shared learning.



## NEED

Sustainability is aided through an awareness of research findings and practitioner's needs to ensure best use of available science and increase our shared capacity to address information gaps. Emphasis is placed on social and ecological communities at risk to enhance well-being in the region and beyond.



## PURPOSE

The center exhibits the story of 'we', a collaboration possible through the richly diverse network of people and resources in the LA metro area. The LA Urban Center is a convener, contributing to resilience by: facilitating the identification of research information needs, aiding engagement in emerging and ongoing research, transferring the best available science findings to researchers and practitioners, supporting conservation education, training in research and applications, engaging the next generation of scholars and practitioners, and inspiring a dialogue across geographic and institutional boundaries.





## GOALS

These goals inform the LA Urban Center's priorities and provide guidance actions and decisions. Research and application areas generally focus on urban natural resources sustainability and socioecological resilience including inquiries focused on trees, water, air, soil, and sociocultural aspects.

- Leverage and foster the network of partnerships among organizations, local governments, and communities to sustain and enhance the quality and function of urban natural resources and well-being in the region;
- Convene a community of research and practice to share resources toward improving understanding of the critical functions of urban ecosystems and their response to biological, physical and social change;
- Assess social and ecological trends that inform resident actions, management, and policy directions aiding long term resilience;
- Develop and deliver information and tools that improve resilience, with an emphasis on social and ecological communities at risk;
- Connect urban communities through engagement and volunteerism to foster knowledge, understanding, and stewardship of the natural environment;
- Create and deliver collaborative learning opportunities for youth in natural resource careers; and
- Deliver activities and programs that are responsive to community-based concerns, needs, and priorities seeking equitable benefit across LA's diverse communities.



# MANAGEMENT

## Executive Oversight Team

Advisory functions for the LA Urban Center are provided through an Executive Oversight Team (“EOT”). The Team ideally consists of (but may not be limited to) representatives from each of the following sectors:

- USDA Forest Service
- City of Los Angeles
- California State Urban Forestry
- Private Industry
- Regional Urban Forestry Non-Profit Organization
- Youth Outreach, Environmental Justice, and/or Environmental Literacy
- Academia/Research

Aside from the two organizations linked in the initial MOU, the EOT will have no more than two (2) representatives from each sector who may serve on the EOT concurrently. Additional sectors may be added through consensus of the EOT. The EOT establishes an annual plan of work informed through our strategic plan, our network of partners, and through formal and informal input from stakeholders.

For more information on EOT, See Appendix A.

## RESEARCH



1. Climate Ready Trees Study
2. STEW MAP
3. Tree Planting Preference Study
4. Environmental Justice and Tree Plantings

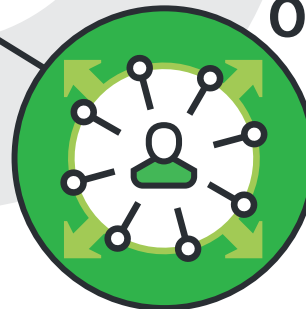
# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## CONVENING



1. Annual Partner Meeting
2. Fellows Seminar Series
3. Hot Topic Seminars on Drought, Fire, and Forest Health

## OUTREACH



1. Arborfest
2. Tree Plantings
3. Research Database



# Strategic Plans and Charters related to the LA Urban Center

*USDA Strategic Plan: FY 2018–2022*

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-strategic-plan-2018-2022.pdf>

*USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan: FY2015–2020*

[https://www.fs.fed.us/sites/default/files/strategic-plan%5B2%5D-6\\_17\\_15\\_revised.pdf](https://www.fs.fed.us/sites/default/files/strategic-plan%5B2%5D-6_17_15_revised.pdf)

*Pacific Southwest Research Station Strategic Framework*

<https://www.fs.fed.us/psw/about/accomplishments/PSWStrategicFrameworkBrochure.pdf>

*Land Management Plan for Angeles National Forest*

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/angeles/landmanagement/planning>

*San Gabriel Mountains National Monument Management Plan*

[https://www.fs.usda.gov/nfs/11558/www/nepa/101660\\_FSPLT3\\_4291063.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/nfs/11558/www/nepa/101660_FSPLT3_4291063.pdf)

*CAL FIRE Urban and Community Forestry Program Strategic Plan*

[http://calfire.ca.gov/resource\\_mgt/downloads/CA\\_UrbanForestPlan\\_20140109\)\\_FINAL.pdf](http://calfire.ca.gov/resource_mgt/downloads/CA_UrbanForestPlan_20140109)_FINAL.pdf)

*National Urban and Community Forest Advisory Council Ten-Year Urban Forestry Action Plan (2016–2026)*

<https://urbanforestplan.org/engage/>

*Crowdsourcing and Citizen Science Act of 2017*

<https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ329/PLAW-114publ329.pdf>

*California's Climate Adaptation Strategy*

<http://resources.ca.gov/docs/climate/safeguarding/update2018/safeguarding-california-plan-2018-update.pdf>



Partnerships are essential to the success of the LA Urban Center. Thank you to our partners that serve on the EOT for leading this revision.



# Appendix A:

## Executive Oversight Team (EOT)

### Member Role

EOT members serve as an advisory and recommending body, representing the unique issues, needs, capabilities, and opportunities of their represented sector. The EOT also recommends potential outreach activities and strategic partnerships for the LA Urban Center and provides recommendations and input on how the LA Urban Center can best contribute to the region and support its partner organizations.

EOT members will serve without compensation and can expect to dedicate 6-12 days to LA Urban Center business per calendar year. EOT members are expected to attend quarterly LA Urban Center EOT calls and any necessary meetings involving LA Urban Center business.

For purposes of conducting LA Urban Center business and as it is used herein, simple majority shall be interpreted to mean a voting requirement of more than half of the quorum of the attending EOT members.

### Nomination & Appointment Term

The EOT ideally consists of (but may not be limited to) representatives from each of the following sectors:

- USDA Forest Service
- City of Los Angeles
- California State Urban Forestry
- Private Industry
- Urban Forestry Non-Profit Organization
- Urban Youth Outreach, Environmental Justice, and/or Environmental Literacy
- Academia/Research

Aside from the two organizations linked in the initial MOU, the EOT will have no more than two (2) representatives from each sector who may serve on the EOT concurrently. All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure all sectors are represented on the EOT. In some cases, an EOT member may be well suited and fully capable to represent more than one sector.

Aside from the two organizations linked in the initial MOU, EOT members are appointed for a three-year term and no individual EOT member may serve more than three consecutive terms. EOT Members may extend their term so long as their continued tenure would not exceed the three consecutive two-year term limit.

If someone is interested in applying to serve on the EOT, the prospective applicant will need to provide their name, email, address, title, employer, applicable EOT position (sector), and qualifications for the desired position and submit it to USDA Forest Service through the LA Urban Centers contact page – <http://laurbanresearchcenter.org/contact-us/> . It is the role of the Forest Service to bring forward these applications for discussion among the EOT. A vacant sector or anticipated vacancy and simple majority are required to appoint a new EOT member.

In the event an EOT member cannot attend any LA Urban Center EOT call or meeting, the EOT member may send an alternate for information sharing. EOT members who fail to attend three consecutive calls or meetings and fail to provide an alternate will no longer be a member of the EOT. This will initiate a message of severance and opens a vacancy on the EOT. The EOT will then convene either virtually or in person to bring forward nominees from the appropriate sector. Reasonable exceptions may be made if either advance notice is provided and an alternate cannot be sent or there is a highly compelling reason in the judgment of the EOT majority.

## Function & Capacity

For purposes of conducting LA Urban Center business, a simple majority shall be a voting requirement of more than half of the quorum of the attending EOT members. A majority of the EOT members at meeting shall constitute a quorum. All EOT members shall be fully advised of any decision made by a quorum in their absence through meeting notes.

EOT members may remove themselves from any decision making process without penalty should there be an actual or perceived conflict of interest. In the event a quorum is present but for the abstaining EOT member, the decision making process may continue without interruption.

## Science Review Team

In conjunction with the EOT, a Science Review Team comprised of LA Urban Center partners and researchers/academics will be assembled ad hoc for the purposes of refining topics for the call for proposals for interns, fellowships, targeted research inquiries, or development of tools; constructing the calls for proposals, and reviewing and rating the proposals received. The Science Review Team is chaired by an EOT member from the Pacific Southwest Research Station.

## Appendix B:

# Science Planning and Focus

The original science topics identified when establishing the center were grouped into six categories: urban natural resources sustainability, trees, water, air, soil, and socioeconomic, sociocultural resilience (see our website for the original strategic plan, including the research topics and questions generated through various forms of input). Subsequent engagements among the EOT, with partners, and end users has informed the breadth, depth, and focus of these topical areas. A number of innovative advancements within each of these topics has been the hallmark of the LAUC. Additional topics based on urgent or needs identified through the LAUC partners, end users, and the EOT.

Progress within each topical area is summarized on the LAUC website to record accomplishments, and is further shared in the research information database summarizing publications, presentations delivered at partner meetings and engagements, as well as scientific and professional conferences, and through tools and information summaries crafted and disseminated on an ongoing basis.

Science focus and emphasis of researchers within the Pacific Southwest Research Station (PSWRS) often aligns with the LAUC topical interests. The EOT members affiliated with PSWRS maintain communication of latest research direction and findings relevant to the center focused on their own work, as well as the broader work completed and ongoing within PSWRS. Each sitting EOT member shares research and application findings from their respective networks and PSWRS members aid center research direction on an ongoing basis.

Beyond sharing ongoing research across networks, new research may be initiated by partners investing their own or leveraged resources, and through supported fellowships and training opportunities. The LAUC endeavors to enhance awareness of emerging and ongoing research through various means including convening of meetings, workshops, and the website.

The following is a brief summary of interests within each research topic area:

### Urban Natural Resources Sustainability

An assessment of the ecological values found within the Los Angeles urbanized area, including measures of biodiversity, impacts and benefits of non-native species, and species loss especially tied to climate change.

Environmental impacts from the forest downstream to the city as well as impacts from the city on the forested lands.

Benefits of chaparral, especially carbon storage.

How to characterize and quantify the benefits provided by trees and urban forest canopy cover within a metropolitan area especially considering air pollution mitigation, water pollution mitigation, carbon sequestration, urban heat island mitigation, and reduced energy demand from shading of buildings.

The impacts of climate change on urban forests and the anticipated changes to tree mortality, species selection, water availability, etc.



## Trees

Long-term monitoring of urban tree planting in varying settings including sustainability studies based on neighborhood-scale street tree plantings, school plantings and commercial corridor plantings.

Information about pests and potential invasions, and how these differ under a changing climate.

What to plant today for carbon sequestration into the future.

When and under what circumstances it is beneficial to not plant trees, especially if planting conflicts with other values (other species, pests, etc.).

The role of tree root pruning.

The benefits of residential trees for home owners, and neighbors.

Urban tree life expectancy.

## Water

Impacts of extended drought on social and ecological systems.

Use of trees in bioswales.

Stormwater recapture and use.

Sustainable and effective watering practices for green infrastructure.

The balance between rainfall interception/capture, water uptake, and ground water recharge.

Rainwater harvesting to mitigate anticipated climate change impacts and water shortages.

Long-term effects of use of recycled water.

An assessment of vegetation at urban waterways.

Identification of plant species to plant now in anticipation of decreased water supply.

## Air

The trading of carbon credits: what that is, is it worth it, and what happens for different micro-climates.

Vegetation for air quality screening (such as along roadways). Specifically, which vegetation types to use, what is effective (including special arrangement), and for what pollutants.

## Soil

Assessments of soil volume and quality.

The role of soil organic matter, especially loss of organic matter and tree/plant health assessment.

## Social (socioeconomic/sociocultural)

Public health.

How to utilize citizen science.

How to promote environmental literacy and environmental justice.

How to bring pressing urban environmental issues to the minds of our urban youth.

Kids and outdoor connections such as the impacts to school test scores and satisfaction with school related to having “green space” on campus or on the way to campus.

Urban environmental policies (such as finding ones that work in other urban locations).

The role of urban forests in feeding people.

Public land use by urban residents (such as best ways to promote access to low-income communities).

Perceptions about the economic and non-economic values of natural places and environmental services.