

# Urban Forest Task Force Applicant

**Emily Forscher**

**Application Date: 06/15/21**

## **INTERESTS AND EXPERIENCE**

### **Current or prior service on city boards/commissions:**

Urban Forest Task Force

### **Community activities:**

As part of Santa Monica's local brigade of Code for America, I established and lead a volunteer group called Public Tree Map ([publictreemap.org](http://publictreemap.org)). This project grew out of a discussion I heard at an Urban Forest Task Force meeting. In collaboration with the city's Urban Forest Task Force members, Urban Forest administrators and managers, we've developed a free, open-source web map of Santa Monica's publicly owned trees. The project aims to improve access to information and appreciation for the city's urban forest. Volunteers include data analysts, Santa Monica High School students, city staff, web developers, urban planners, and designers. As part of this project, I also collaborated with SMC Professor Dr. Poliana Raymer on a pilot project to help her students track city trees' longterm carbon storage. Last May, Time Out LA featured the in-progress tree map website and described it as "easily the slickest option" for locating jacaranda trees.

I'm an active member of the California Native Plant Society's Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains and Bryophyte chapters. I regularly participate in the Bay Foundation's "Friends of LAX Dunes" monthly native plant restoration events. Since January 2018, I've attended all but one Urban Forest Task Force meeting.

### **Qualifications, experience, education, and technical or professional requirements:**

I currently serve as a member of the Urban Forest Task Force. I've always had an interest in trees and plants. From 2014-2016, I volunteered at the University of California and Jepson Herbarium and served as a plant propagation volunteer at San Francisco Botanical Garden. As part of a study at University of Michigan in 2016, I conducted botanical fieldwork focused on morphological variation within *Taxodium distichum* trees across five southeastern states. As an undergraduate at Princeton University, I studied archaeology and gained field experience with paleobotany, geospatial data collection and analysis. I completed elective coursework in GIS and remote sensing at SMC and learned to apply these tools study urban tree canopy cover.

### **Goals:**

I will work to protect the city's mature trees and expand the city-owned Urban Forest, total tree canopy coverage, and climate-conscious species diversity. As a member of the task force, I endeavor to improve community interest and understanding of the urban forest's value. In the upcoming term, I hope to help support the ongoing development of an effective private tree protection ordinance.

**Vision:**

Santa Monica's Urban Forest is special. I worry too few people recognize it as a public asset. I think the Urban Forest Task Force's role is to advocate for the city's urban forest and support city staff in their efforts to do the same.

I appreciate the city's use of LiDAR to measure the canopy, track changes over time, and learn from these findings. I want to promote these efforts and explore how else city staff can use data to maintain and document the Urban Forest and to demonstrate its value in Santa Monica.

**Personal Qualities:**

Despite the limitations of the pandemic, I've committed to my service on the Urban Forest Task Force. While our meetings were on hold, I reviewed city tree records, identified some inconsistencies, and worked with Urban Forest Supervisor Peter Provenzale to document city-owned trees.

In order to develop and continue to improve the Public Tree Map, I've worked with volunteers across disciplines and skillsets. The project's required patience, leadership, and collaboration. I've sought input from a variety of groups with different skills and competing interests in the city's Urban Forest.

**Will you be able to commit the necessary time to perform your duties if appointed to the board?**  
yes

**How did you learn about the vacancy in this board or commission? (select all that apply)**

Word of Mouth- Council or Board/Commission member, City Staff, neighborhood groups, etc.

Other

**BUSINESS INFORMATION**

Occupation: Project Director

Business name: LA Counts

Business address:

Business phone: