



County of Orange

County Executive Office

September 10, 2019

Honorable Kirk H. Nakamura
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Subject: Response to Grand Jury Report, "Orange County's Urban Forest"

Dear Judge Nakamura:

Per your request, and in accordance with Penal Code 933, please find the County of Orange response to the subject report as approved by the Board of Supervisors. The respondents are the Orange County Board of Supervisors and the County Executive Office.

If you have any questions, please contact Lala Oca Ragen of the County Executive Office at 714-834-7219.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Frank Kim", is written over a horizontal line.

Frank Kim
County Executive Officer

Enclosure

cc: Orange County Grand Jury
Lala Oca Ragen, Assistant Deputy Chief Operating Officer, County Executive Office



Responses to Findings and Recommendations
2018-19 Grand Jury Report:

“Orange County’s Urban Forest”

SUMMARY RESPONSE STATEMENT:

On June 20, 2019, the Grand Jury released a report entitled “Orange County’s Urban Forest.” This report directed responses to findings and recommendations to the Orange County Board of Supervisors. The responses are below:

FINDINGS AND RESPONSES:

F6. Environmental and economic benefits provided by urban forests have not been fully realized in Orange County cities identified in F10 and the unincorporated areas of Orange County.

Response: Disagrees partially with the finding. Given the limited focus of the Grand Jury Report on street trees (rather than multiple categories of trees cited in the report including street trees, park trees, homeowner association trees and private trees) and on costs associated only with liability claims from street trees, it is difficult to assess the validity of the broad statement of Finding 6. Further evaluation, specific to Orange County, could be conducted by the University of California (UC) Cooperative Extension Orange County, a component of UC Agriculture and Natural Resources.

F8. The County of Orange does not coordinate a cohesive urban forest program with its cities.

Response: Agrees with the finding. Rather than funding a County position related to urban forestry management, the County of Orange provides core funding to leverage the expertise of the University of California (UC) Cooperative Extension Orange County, a component of UC Agriculture and Natural Resources, to address critical issues in areas where researchers and professional educators have extraordinary expertise. UC Cooperative Extension responds to these critical issues by placing academics in the County to serve the residents in collaboration with various County Departments. In April 2019, UC Agriculture and Natural Resources invested in an urban forestry advisor position placed in Orange County. Tasked with conducting an education and applied research program addressing high priority issues in urban forest management, Dr. Beatriz Nobua-Behrmann has already implemented an active research and extension program targeting invasive shot-hole borers; currently the most significant exotic invasive pest of urban trees. General tree health in urban and wildland interfaces will also be one of her focus areas. Other priorities she will address include the value of urban forests for ecological functions (habitat, climate mitigation goals and air pollution) and value to human communities (recreation and aesthetics). Extension of her research will be delivered to a variety of clientele including arborists, city and county staff managing tree inventories, and professionals contracted to maintain our urban forests. UC

Cooperative Extension is looking forward to bringing high quality urban forest research and education to Orange County to assist end users with improved urban forestry management.

F9. The County of Orange does not have an allocated street budget for unincorporated areas (Appendix B).

Response: Disagrees wholly with the finding. The County of Orange annually budgets \$1.5 million for tree maintenance (\$1,050,000 for trees within County road right-of-way and \$450,000 for trees within Orange County Flood Control District right-of-way). The budgeted funds are used for tree maintenance that includes tree trimming and removal, tree replacement and planting, emergency responses, pest/disease management, arborist evaluations, and GPS inventory, along County maintained roads in unincorporated areas and along Orange County Flood Control District facilities throughout all of Orange County.

In addition, OC Parks is responsible for approximately 100 street trees. There is no specific line item budget for the street trees, which are maintained from OC Parks' \$3 million annual tree maintenance budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES:

R4. By September 30, 2019, the County of Orange and each of the cities listed in F10 should individually, or through an MOU or other cooperative agreement with as many other Orange County cities as are willing to cooperate, hire or contract with an Urban Forest Coordinator to (F7, F8):

- **Act as a resource to provide advice to the County and the cities and assist them with coordination among each other.**
- **Coordinate volunteer groups to participate in and enhance the County and each city's urban forest program.**

Response: The recommendation has been implemented. Since 2005, a renewable 5-year agreement has been in place for the County of Orange to provide core funding to the UC Cooperative Extension Orange County to address critical issues in areas where researchers and professional educators have extraordinary expertise. In April 2019, UC Agriculture and Natural Resources invested in an urban forestry advisor position placed in Orange County. Dr. Beatriz Nobua-Behrmann has begun an active research and extension program targeting invasive shot-hole borers; currently the most significant exotic invasive pest of urban trees. Her work will also focus on general tree health in urban and wildland interfaces, the value of urban forests for ecological functions (habitat, climate mitigation goals and air pollution) and value to human communities (recreation and aesthetics). Her research will be delivered to a variety of clientele including arborists, city and county staff managing tree inventories, and professionals contracted to maintain our urban forests. Additionally, the UC Cooperative Extension Orange County develops and coordinates an extensive network of volunteer groups focused on horticultural issues and interests, such as the Orange County Master Gardener and 4-H youth development programs which can, in coordination with Dr. Nobua-Behrmann's efforts, participate in and enhance urban forestry in Orange County.

R5. By September 30, 2019, the County of Orange should reevaluate allocating a street tree budget for unincorporated areas (F9).

Response: The recommendation has been implemented. The County of Orange annually budgets \$1.5 million for tree maintenance (\$1,050,000 for trees within County road right-of-way and \$450,000 for trees within Orange County Flood Control District right-of-way). The budgeted

funds are used for tree maintenance that includes tree trimming and removal, tree replacement and planting, emergency responses, pest/disease management, arborist evaluations, and GPS inventory, along County maintained roads in unincorporated areas and along Orange County Flood Control District facilities throughout all of Orange County.

In addition, OC Parks is responsible for approximately 100 street trees. There is no specific line item budget for the street trees, which are maintained from OC Parks' \$3 million annual tree maintenance budget.