

Cypress

Environmental and Land Use Planning

P. O. Box 1844 Aptos CA 95001
(831) 685-1007 www.cypressenv.com

Kim Tschantz, MSP, CEP



Spring Newsletter *April 2013*

Happy spring! The month of April includes two important days celebrating our environment:

Earth Day - April 22 and Arbor Day - April 26

In this issue of the Newsletter:

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Newsletter Continues.....

Trees in the Urban Environment Foster Economic Vitality and Better Human Health



Tree Cover Can Show Income Inequality

By now most people are keenly aware of the carbon sequestering benefits that trees provide as a significant way to help combat the problem of greenhouse gases and global warming, but recent studies have concluded that trees on city streets and urban plazas and parks have other benefits. Environmental writer and University of Illinois researcher, Tim De Chant, released several satellite photos in his blog this past summer which showed income inequality of communities based on tree cover. For example, Redwood City, CA has much less tree cover along its commercial and residential streets than neighboring Atherton, one of the highest income municipalities in the San Francisco Bay area. East Palo Alto, the city with the lowest average income in the Bay Area, has less tree cover than Redwood City. This phenomena is not just restricted to the USA. De Chant's blog went viral last summer and he received a huge response. His blog readers sent him their own aerial images of different parts of the same city from around the world. These aerial images are striking. Poor areas in Vancouver or Mexico City appear gray and almost treeless. Affluent areas appear verdant and covered with all forms of vegetation. These aerial images are fascinating. You can see them at [Tim De Chant's Blog](#).

Sick Trees Make Sick People

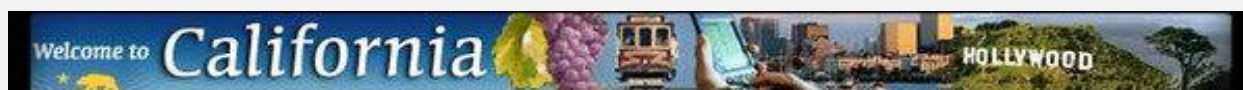
Another unrelated study shows there is a link between trees in a community and human health. In 2002 the ash tree plague began in Canton, Michigan. The ash borer, a dangerous insect pest from overseas, began infecting these common Midwestern trees. The infection of ash trees rapidly spread throughout Michigan and then to Ontario, Ohio, Indiana and other neighboring states. Within four years of becoming infected, ash trees die, greatly reducing tree cover in many parks and streets. When the U. S. Forest Service began researching this plague the researchers discovered a surprising correlation with another form of mortality--that of humans. In counties which had the highest rate of ash tree mortality, there was also a greater rate of human death, specifically from cardiovascular and lower respiratory diseases. The study concluded "the relationship between trees and human health is convincingly strong". However, [the study](#) did not explain why this connection occurred.



Reviewers of the study have suggested that people are more dependent on the increased oxygen and air

filtering that trees provide, then many realize. When a significant portion of mature trees are removed fairly rapidly; and more quickly than they can be replaced with new mature trees, life that depends on the oxygen they produce will be affected. It's Arbor Day this week. Plant a tree! Plant two trees!

One of the Hottest Issues in Sacramento State Legislators Line up to Revise California's Environmental Quality Act



Is CEQA Being Abused?

If you are an environmental planner in California, you already know all about this. But for the rest of you, it may be surprising to learn that California's landmark 43-year old environmental law is under attack by members of both major political parties. But its defenders are making a lot of noise too. The California Environmental Quality Act, known as CEQA, requires a careful assessment of potentially significant environmental impacts of projects subject to government approvals and requires the conditioning of approval decisions upon project modifications and permit conditions to fully mitigate adverse impacts. As such, CEQA has been responsible for substantial environmental protection and creating more sustainable and better designed projects. But opponents of the law say special interest groups use CEQA as a weapon to delay or block projects that may be necessary or desirable from a larger community perspective. According to CEQA detractors, the most notable example of this abuse was the use of CEQA by opponents of California's high-speed rail project to halt the so called "bullet train" project. This project, the largest public works project in the State's history, has over-spent its planning stages budget, in part, to address environmental concerns of high-speed rail opponents and to defend the project in court. For example, one group of opponents of the proposed route for the bullet train in the San Francisco Bay area sued based on an inadequate CEQA analysis of the proposed route. This resulted in 163 court filings.

Legislators Author 25 Bills to Reform CEQA



While there is consensus that CEQA should be revised, there is little agreement on how to do it. Currently there are 25 proposed bills to amend CEQA, including some that would strengthen its ability for more environmental protection. The Skov Law Corp. has provided a [synopsis of 10 of these bills](#). Leading the charge to revise or "modernize" CEQA was State Senator Michael Rubio, a conservative Democrat from the San Joaquin Valley. But Mr. Rubio, himself, increased the drama surrounding "modernizing CEQA" by quitting in the middle of his term to take a job as a lobbyist for petroleum industry giant

Chevron! Rubio's chairmanship of the Senate's Environment Committee was then handed to a more liberal Democrat, Jerry Hill, who appears to be pro-CEQA. Since January pro-CEQA groups have struck back and formed a coalition named [CEQAWorks](#) to defend the 43-year old law. Now some speculate CEQA reform may be on life support. But news on this issue seems to change weekly. One of the better opinion articles

Cypress Environmental Hired to Provide Planning Services for the City of Capitola



Cypress Environmental and Land Use Planning has been hired by the picturesque seaside city of Capitola-by-the-Sea to provide planning services for selected projects while the City's Community Development Department goes through a transition. The City's long-time Community Development Director has recently retired and a new director from out of the area will begin in a few weeks. Capitola is a city of 10,000 located on the Monterey Bay. It is known for its charming downtown village located right at the beach, its tourist industry and a large commercial center that includes the county's only shopping mall. Cypress will provide both land use planning and environmental planning services for larger project proposals. Some of them will be featured in future newsletters.

Kim Tschantz, MSP, CEP

Environmental Planning and Analysis, Permitting and Project Management