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# CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

## California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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### **CAL FIRE Highlights the Importance of Trees in California 2016 California Arbor Week Poster and Video Contest Announced**

Sacramento – Trees are an essential part of California’s climate and are vital to improving air quality and conserving water. To help educate Californians on the value that trees provide to building successful, healthy cities and neighborhoods, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and California ReLeaf are announcing the annual statewide Arbor Week poster contest for students in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Rules and details can be found online [here](#). In addition, this year CAL FIRE and California ReLeaf are also holding a new video contest for students in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Rules and details for the video contest can be found [here](#). For each contest, students are asked to create original artwork or video based on the theme **“Trees & Water: Sources of Life” (Árboles y Agua: Fuentes de Vida)**. Also new for 2016 are revitalized lesson plans that align with Common Core Standards. Submissions are due to California ReLeaf by February 12, 2016. Winners will be featured at the State Fair, displayed on the California ReLeaf/CAL FIRE websites, and awarded cash prizes provided by CAL FIRE, the California Community Forests Foundation, and California ReLeaf.

CAL FIRE and California ReLeaf are partnering to encourage cities, nature groups, schools, and youth organizations to celebrate California Arbor Week by planting trees in their communities. California ReLeaf works statewide to promote alliances among community-based groups, individuals, industry, and government agencies working to protect the environment by planting and caring for trees and the state’s urban and community forests.

“Trees offer so many more benefits than what we see,” said CAL FIRE Deputy Director Helge Eng. “Their importance to the environment, climate, economy and the overall well-being of humanity is critical. This is especially true during times of challenging drought conditions.”

The goals of Arbor Week include educating Californians about trees, encouraging tree planting, teaching elementary school children the environmental, social, and economic benefits of trees, and protecting the state’s valuable natural resources.

“Arbor Week is a celebration of the coming of spring, honoring the importance of trees for Californians,” said Cindy Blain, Executive Director of California ReLeaf. “As we face drought and other extreme weather events, trees play a vital role in making our cities and towns more climate resilient. Trees sequester carbon, cool the air to reduce urban heat island effect, and capture rain water to replenish our aquifers. Planting trees is an incredibly simple and effective way to offset the impacts of climate change. We must keep planting trees - especially as we deal with drought.”

Contest rules and the new educational materials can be downloaded at <http://arborweek.org/for-educators/>. The contest is sponsored by California ReLeaf, CAL FIRE, and the California Community Forests Foundation.

California Arbor Week runs March 7-14 every year to mark famed horticulturist Luther Burbank's birthday and to raise awareness of the benefits of trees in our communities. In 2011, legislation was passed to define California Arbor Week in statute. Visit [www.arborweek.org](http://www.arborweek.org) for more information.

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