News Release

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Trees in the Interior West Improve Quality of Life

Each tree planted in Interior West communities adds to residents' quality of life, not just by increasing the beauty of our surroundings, but by providing a great many valuable ecosystem services. Urban trees improve air quality, help conserve energy, intercept and filter stormwater, and help in the fight against global climate change by reducing atmospheric carbon dioxide. These are the findings of the most recent publication in the Community Tree Guide series, *The Interior West Community Tree Guide: Benefits, Costs, and Strategic Planting*, published by the US Forest Service's Center for Urban Forest Research, a unit of the Pacific Southwest Research Station.

In addition to describing the many benefits of trees, the Tree Guide quantifies them. Average annual net benefits (taking maintenance costs into account) for trees in the Interior West differ with the size of the tree and where it is planted:

- $1 to $7 for a small tree
- $18 to $25 for a medium tree
- $59 to $68 for a large tree
- $11 to $20 for a coniferous tree

The most significant benefit provided by trees in the hot, arid Interior West is energy conservation. By shading nearby buildings, a large, mature, strategically planted deciduous tree can save nearly $60 per year in electricity costs. By conserving energy, the same tree also reduces the production of pollutants and greenhouse gases at the power plant. At the same time, the tree is sequestering carbon dioxide as it grows (several tons over a lifetime), absorbing air pollutants (more than 10 lbs a year), and intercepting stormwater (3,500 gallons each year). Trees provide a host of other less tangible aesthetic, social, economic, and health benefits that should be included in any benefit-cost analysis. In Interior West communities, the aesthetic and other benefits of a large tree are estimated at about $1,800 over its lifetime.

For residents, tree enthusiasts, and policy makers who are interested in learning more about the value that their urban forest is providing, the Tree Guide includes a chapter explaining how the data can be adapted to local uses. Guidelines for maximizing benefits and reducing costs are also given.

The Interior West Community Tree Guide: Benefits, Costs, and Strategic Planting and the others in the regional series can be found here: http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/programs/cufr/tree_guides.php.