



Meet Your Urban and Community Forestry Program Team!

Read on to learn more about the team serving your urban and community forests in the Pacific Southwest Region.



Miranda Hutten, Program Manager

Since 2015, Miranda has led the Urban and Community Forest Program for the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5) of the Forest Service. Her program area in Region 5 covers California, Hawai'i, and the U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands (Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Republic of the Marshall Islands, American Samoa, and Palau). Her goal is to further partnerships with states, cities, communities, and nonprofit organizations to increase awareness of the importance of trees in sustaining healthy and safe communities. Miranda is a graduate of the School of Environmental and Public Affairs at Indiana University with master's degrees in both natural resources management and applied ecology. She was appointed as a Presidential Management Fellow (PMF) in the Forest Service as well as served in natural resource management roles at various government levels and non-profits. In her spare time, Miranda enjoys wilderness camping across the region and attempting to develop a green thumb in her backyard.



Alicia Sanchez Scott, Assistant Program Manager

Alicia is an Assistant Program Manager with the Urban and Community Forestry Program in Region 5 of the Forest Service. She began her career in 2007 through the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) at the Sierra National Forest, where she worked as a Recreation Technician. Alicia earned a bachelor's degree in recreation administration as well as Chicano and Latin American studies from

California State University, Fresno. Following her studies, she served as the District Recreation Program Manager on the Los Padres National Forest as an intern in the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). Throughout her career, Alicia has managed various assignments in Region 5, focusing on wilderness management, recreation, trails, special uses, grants and agreements, and conservation education across the Sierra National Forest, Los Padres National Forest, and the Pacific Southwest Regional Office. In 2023, she transitioned to the Urban and Community Forestry team within State and Private Forestry. As a native of California, she enjoys camping, kayaking, backpacking, gardening, and exploring the Sierra Nevada mountains with her family.



Katie Custard, Grants Management Program Specialist

Katie is a Program Specialist working with the Urban and Community Forestry program, specializing in grants management. Katie's passion for the outdoors led her to pursue a bachelor's degree in wildlife science from the College of Environmental Science and Forestry at the State University of New York (SUNY). During this time, she also interned with the NYS Department of Conservation, supporting wildlife management and conservation and gaining hands on

experience with wildlife. Before joining the Forest Service in 2023, Katie previously worked for the Department of the Navy while living in Italy. With the Forest Service she is excited to continue her professional growth while also helping to positively impact communities. Katie currently lives in Washington State, where she spends her free time hiking in the Olympic National Forest, camping, and gardening.



Michelle Carr, Program Specialist

Michelle holds a bachelor's and master's degree in environmental sciences from the University of California, Riverside. Prior to graduate school, she was an RA who participated in several outreach events with the LA Urban Center and credits these experiences as fundamental to shaping her career interests and trajectory. One of her major aspirations is bridging the gap between science and the public through engagement and communication with local community members. After graduating in 2022, she

returned to the Forest Service as an Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) fellow with PSW, engaging with agency staff, potential partners, and members of the community to understand their outdoor recreation needs on the San Dimas Experimental Forest. Now, she looks forward to supporting urban and community forestry projects and partners in the LA metropolitan area, and she's grateful for the opportunity to be a liaison between research, management, and the general public to ensure all are connected to the best available science. Outside of work, Michelle spends most of her time at the beach, hiking, roller skating, or traveling. She also considers herself a foodie; she loves cooking and trying new restaurants.



Irene Lona, Grants Administration Consultant

Irene is a grants administration consultant working with the Urban and Community Forestry team, specializing in grants management. Irene has a bachelor's degree in anthropology with a minor in entomology from the University of California, Davis and a master's degree in biological sciences with an emphasis in forest entomology from California State University, Chico. After graduating, she worked as a technician in California and Arizona, identifying and

monitoring invasive insects in orchards and urban communities. Irene served as a Resource Assistant for the Forest Health Protection in Region 5 State & Private Forestry, the Pacific Southwest Research Station. During her Resource Assistant position, she trained in grants management and joined the S&PF grants team which she is currently working with based in Las Vegas, Nevada. Outside of work, she enjoys hiking, gardening, traveling, and trying new hobbies.



Jehane Samaha, National Urban Nursery Specialist

Jehane develops trainings and networking for both urban foresters and nursery growers to improve tree stock quality, enhance connectivity in the urban nursery pipeline, and promote adaptive genetics for urban trees. Jehane is based in Philadelphia and previously worked at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) and the Morris Arboretum. She is an ISA certified municipal arborist and completed a master's thesis at the University of British Columbia on street

tree species selection. Outside of work, Jehane enjoys art and woodworking, hiking and biking, and cooking good meals with community.



Pauline Ordonez, Program Specialist

Pauline is excited to connect the public to their urban and community forests across California, Hawai'i, and the U.S Affiliated Pacific Islands. Previously she served as a Resource Assistant for Region 5 State & Private Forestry, the Pacific Southwest Research Station (PSW), and the Institute of Pacific Island Forestry (IPIF). She has also interned on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest and with the National Parks Service in Boston, creating education programs. Pauline has a bachelor's in English with a minor in conservation biology from

University of California, Los Angeles. Now based in the Bay Area, she spends her free time solving crosswords, exploring local green spaces, and climbing boulders.



Jennipher Himmelmann, Resource Assistant

Jennipher is excited to be a part of the UCF team, receiving mentoring, experiencing on-the-job training, building connections, and developing professional experience. She graduated from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo with a Bachelor of Science in environmental sciences. A Brazilian native who had the privilege of being raised between Brazil, California, and Hawai'i, Jennipher holds each one of these places

near and dear to her heart. These days, Jennipher lives near Hilo on the Big Island of Hawai'i with her husband and son, taking full advantage of living on a beautiful tropical island and enjoy outdoors activities such as snorkeling, diving, fishing, hiking, and birdwatching—to name a few!