



TREEPEOPLE

Media Contact

Jean-Paul Renaud, director of marketing and communications

[jprenaud@treepeople.org](mailto:jprenaud@treepeople.org)

W: 818-623-4896

C: 305-495-7156

**TreePeople accepts leadership over Mountains Restoration Trust  
Move creates the largest community-driven environmental organization in Los Angeles**

LOS ANGELES, CA, November 4, 2019 – In order to move more aggressively to provide solutions to the environmental peril facing Los Angeles, TreePeople announced today that it has accepted leadership over the Calabasas-based Mountain Restoration Trust and its stewardship of 3,000 acres in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The move positions TreePeople as the largest environmental non-profit in the region and one of the largest landholders in the Santa Monica Mountains. The added resources will allow TreePeople to intensify its nearly 50 years of globally recognized work to educate, advocate, protect and restore Southern California's natural and urban ecology.

This expansion strengthens TreePeople at a time of tremendous global demand for innovative solutions around fire resilience, urban forestry, water-security, environmental literacy, equity and climate change.

“This is the beginning of a new era for environmental protection, restoration and education,” said Phil Boesch, chairman of TreePeople’s Board of Directors. “We are committed to protecting our homes from the destructive effects of climate change. By

combining forces with Mountains Restoration Trust, we ensure that we have the resources necessary to meet that goal. We want to make everyone TreePeople and we are delighted that Mountains Restoration Trust is the first to join our community. Climate change is real and we need all hands on deck. Never has it been more important to support TreePeople at this pivotal time in the environmental protection movement.”

As Mountains Restoration Trust becomes a TreePeople affiliate, the combined community of forestry, science, policy, educational, community outreach and land acquisition experts will support millions more community members to restore and protect the Santa Monica Mountains, one of the most unique ecosystems in the world. This joining of forces allows for an urgently needed structure to engage both mountain communities and urban communities towards the common goal of creating a diverse, healthy and climate resilient environment for all.

“TreePeople has been a world leader in protecting and educating people about urban nature, and now with their merger with Mountains Restoration Trust they will be able to connect city-dwellers with the most extraordinary urban biodiversity hotspot in the world—the Santa Monica Mountains,” said Peter Kereiva, a world-renowned climate scientist and executive director of the UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability. “The variety of species per square kilometer in Southern California rivals the variety per unit area found in any tropical forest. I have been doing conservation for 30 years and never have I seen a merger of environmental non-governmental organizations this exciting.”

The area is also home to more than 1,000 archeology sites of significance, primarily from the Californian Native American cultures of the Tongva and Chumash people.

“Not only do we now have a historic opportunity to strengthen our restoration efforts for the good of all Los Angelenos, but we are also inheriting a rich tradition of caring for this sacred land,” said Cindy Montañez, chief executive officer of TreePeople. “This is the first step in our goal to recruit everyone in our community to come together to build greener, healthier and more climate-resilient communities.”

Cindy Montañez, CEO of TreePeople and a former California State Legislator, was appointed the executive director of Mountains Restoration Trust. Ezekiel Schlais, former executive director of Mountains Restoration Trust, became TreePeople’s chief strategy and development officer.

“This forward-thinking model will be a leading example for cities around the globe,” Schlais said. “True sustainability is bigger than a single city block or a standalone nature preserve. Our long-term health will depend on diverse communities rallying for cleaner buildings, more trees, wiser storm drains, and functioning mountain ecosystems. The TreePeople and Mountains Restoration Trust combination offers the holistic tools, leadership and community initiatives that every city around the world now needs and will soon emulate.”

TreePeople and Mountains Restoration Trust are legally affiliated through a membership substitution structure, with Mountains Restoration Trust now part of the TreePeople family. All existing contracts, permits, leases, land ownership and other contractual agreements remain intact and with each respective organization. The legal team was led by Noah Perch-Ahern, a well-recognized environmental attorney and partner at Greenberg Glusker LLC, in partnership with Gibson Dunn, a Los Angeles-based international law firm.

#### About TreePeople

For almost 50 years, [TreePeople](#) has been uniting the power of trees, people, and nature-based solutions to make communities greener, healthier and better prepared for the changing climate. The organization inspires, engages and supports people to take personal responsibility for the urban environment, making it safe, healthy, fun and resilient. TreePeople’s award-winning educational programs and community trainings have become models for the world.

#### About Mountains Restoration Trust

[Mountains Restoration Trust](#), the only non-governmental land trust in the region, protects and enhances the natural and cultural resources of the Santa Monica Mountains through community stewardship and science. In operation since 1981, our long-term knowledge, partnerships and relationships allow us to plant seeds of change that beneficially connect the largest urban park in the world to one of the most influential cities in the world - Los Angeles.