

# Care for Us

Aesthetics and Social Practice in Land Management



Artists' Work:

Grassroots Building

+

Cultural Shifts

# Grassroots: Building Local Community to Sustain



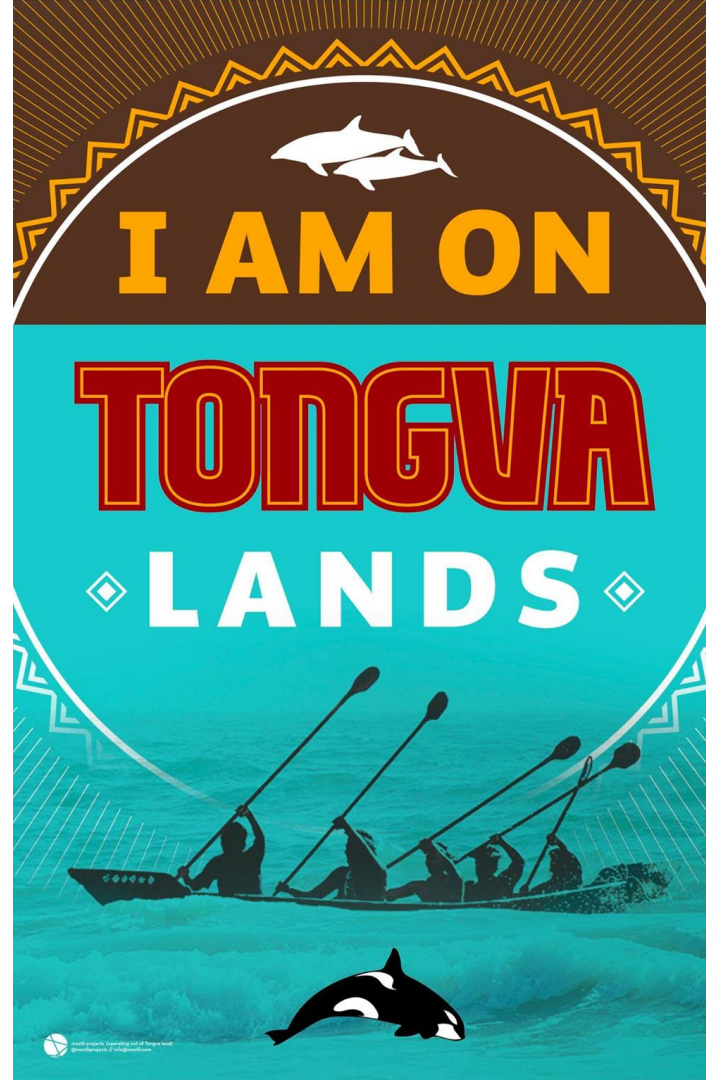
# Cultural Shifts: Centering Indigenous Frameworks





“The Peoples’ Land”

<https://tongva.land/>

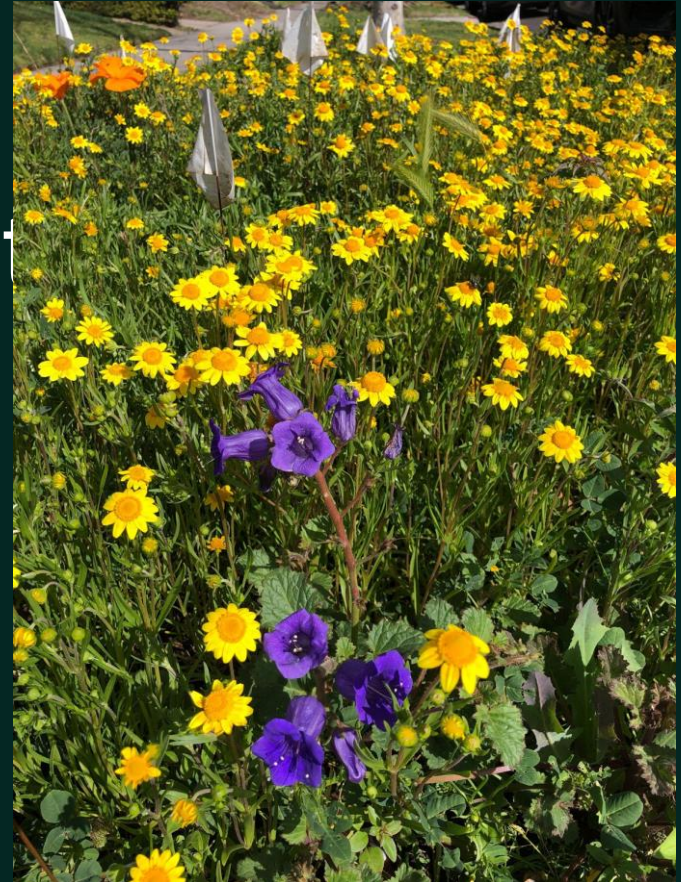


# Block Stewards for Native Medians

Jessica Rath  
Julie Coffey



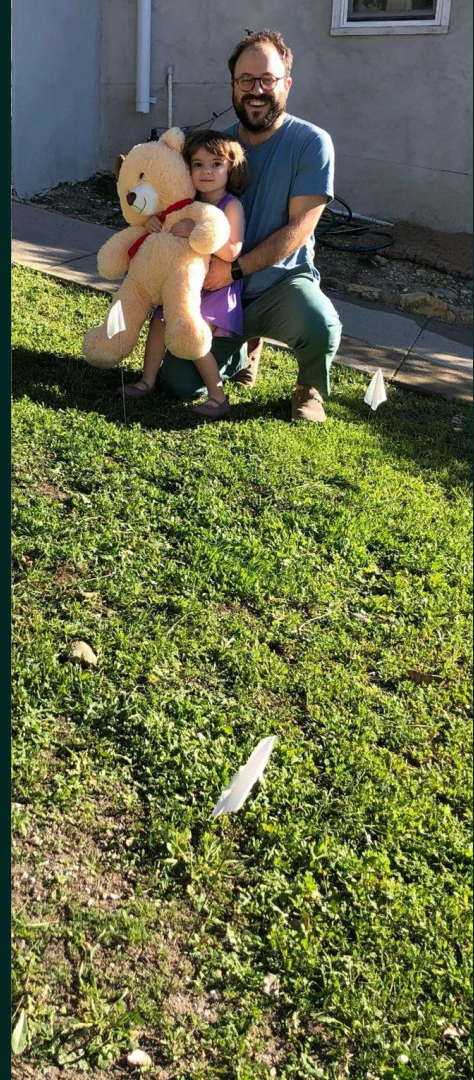
@blockstewards



How can you create  
connection to land in  
troubled times?

# Main Question

Can we increase biodiversity & relationships with the land through native forb seeding in urban medians?







What is a median?

What is a forb?





## Why a Median?

- Public space
- Ignored landscaping
- Tree or shrub focused
- Overly trafficked

## Why Forbs?

- Pollinators
- Seasonal interest
- Establishing by seed
- Economics



# Equity: Bring the Super Bloom to the city



PROCESS  
over  
“GOALS”



## Typical Urban Native Habitat

### Outcome focused

- Seek grant to convert native medians
- “Target” a predetermined participant
- Engage City or agency
- Plop in plants in non-accessible medians

## Typical Urban Native Habitat Outcomes ignore network of people

- Become sterile places
- Are limited to event-oriented stewardship
- Miss connection to plants
- Do not build knowledge or curiosity
- Are not tended or sustained by those living there

# Process Focused

- Makes exciting connections for residents
- Allows for difference in design
- Builds ecological knowledge
- Builds sustainable investment
- Works block by block where native habitat is not typically the discussion.



# Who is a Block Steward?

Instead of sites and  
experts,  
think about ...





## Who

- cares about the parkway
- engages across socio-economic differences
- is curious about plant growth
- likes to weed and share stories
- **and is humble?**



Block Steward: Native Plant Enthusiast Randy



Who is already stewarding: Gardener Dionides

*No one person is prescribing  
what will work.*



Who decentralize powers? Scientists Julie & Jess



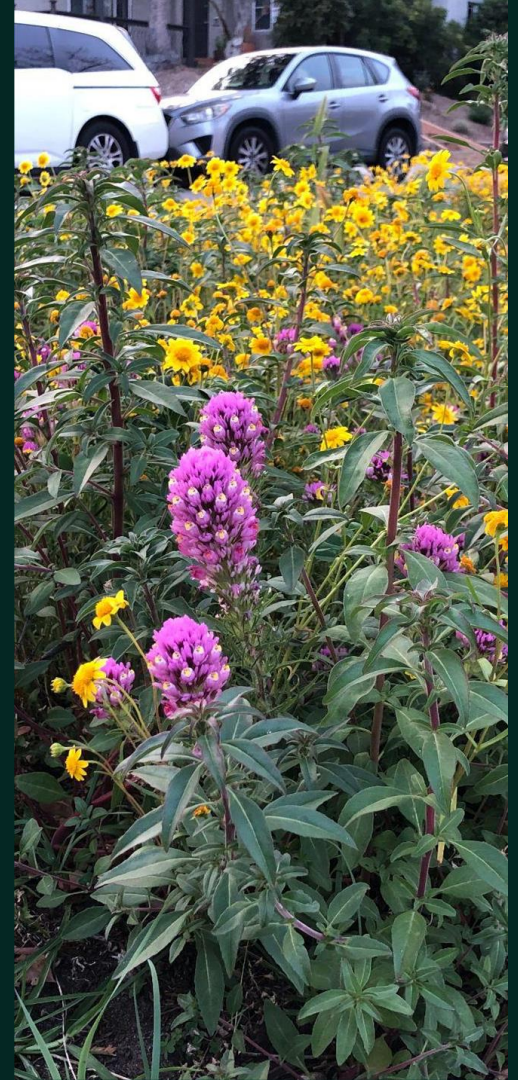
An Information Hub

# Build Community to Sustain



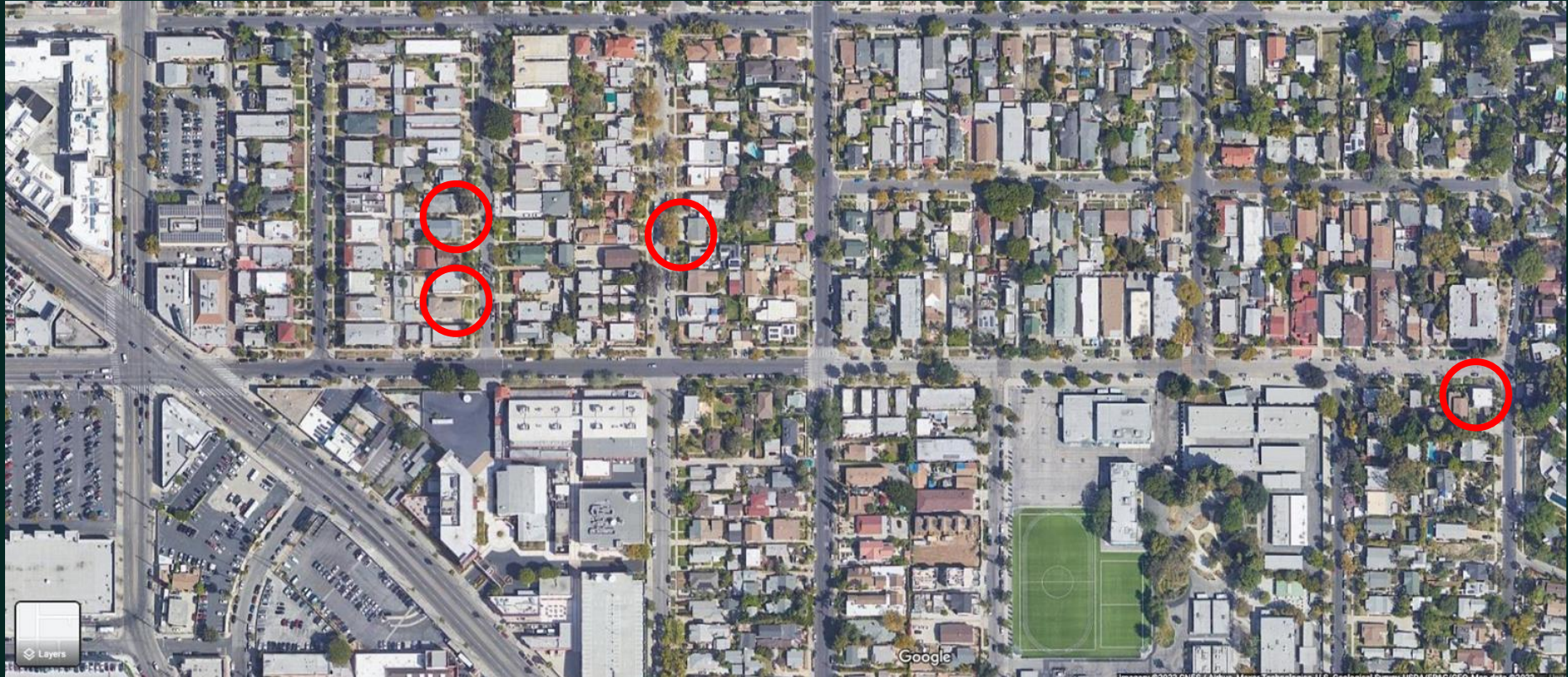
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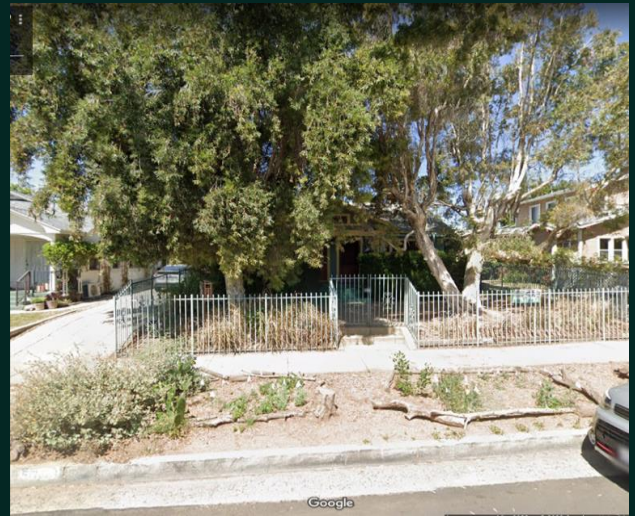




# Existing Sites

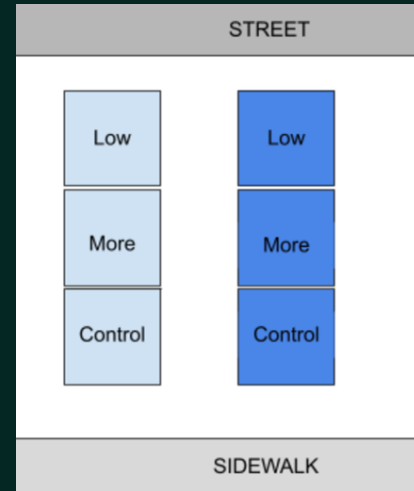


# Medians



# Experiment

We studied germination  
of native forb seeding



We watched, counted & learned



# Plots



# Seed Palettes

## MIX A (Year 1 Mix)



1. California Blue Bell, *Phacelia minor*
2. Farewell-to-Spring, *Clarkia amoena*
3. California Goldfields, *Lasthenia californica*
4. Blue-eyed Grass, *Sisyrinchium bellum*
5. California Poppy, *Escholzia californica*
6. Miniature Lupine, *Lupinus bicolor*

## MIX B

1. Common Phacelia, *Phacelia distans*
2. Farewell-to-Spring, *Clarkia amoena*
3. California Goldfields, *Lasthenia californica*
4. Baby Blue Eyes *Nemophila menziesii*
5. California Poppy, *Escholzia californica*
6. Lindley's Blazing Star *Mentzelia lindleyi*



# What We Learned



**2022**



**2023**



# Year 2 Results

Self Sowing: Goldfield Carpet

Dispersal: Adjacent Lawn Area

Persistent seedbank:

Phacelia

Lupine

Owl's clover

Nemophila



# The Block Stewards network this July



- **Randy** just had dinner with **Eric and partners Clay and Michael** who are excited to meet Sunday to plan solarization
- **Houston** planted an oak tree and salvaged native shrubs
- **Jasmine** asked if native shrubs and flowers could work in the shade of trees
- **Brica and Ernae** report on solarization
- **Clarkia** are blooming



What We Resisted

## Resist

- publicizing
- over-commitment
- “growth” model
- “drop-in” model
- random “throwing seeds”

## Center

- adaptive science specific to neighborhood
- intentional collaborative model
- horizontal organizational structure
- listening

# Cultural Shifts: Centering Indigenous Frameworks



*When working with Ethical Projects*

*be ready to pivot and discard old ideas.*

**Joel Garcia** (Huichol)

Artist and indigenous activist

Metzli Projects

[www.meztliprojects.org](http://www.meztliprojects.org)

HOME > SMUDGE > COMBINATION SMUDGE BUNDLE - PURIFY YOUR SPACE WITH PREMIUM NATURAL HERBS



## COMBINATION SMUDGE BUNDLES

\$19.95 ~~\$24.00~~

**afterpay** available for orders up to \$4,000 ⓘ

**BUNDLE ANY 3 ITEMS & SAVE 20%**

SELECT GEMSTONE:

WHITE SAGE & PINON PINE SMUDGE

LAVENDER S

WHITE SAGE

PATCHOULI

DRAGON'S BLOOD/WHITE SAGE/BLUE SAGE

WHITE SAGE WITH LEMONGRASS & CITRONELLA

T

Tori

Hi there, let me know if you have any questions :)

Click to reply



✕ CLAIM 25% OFF

# Depletion

## Global Distribution

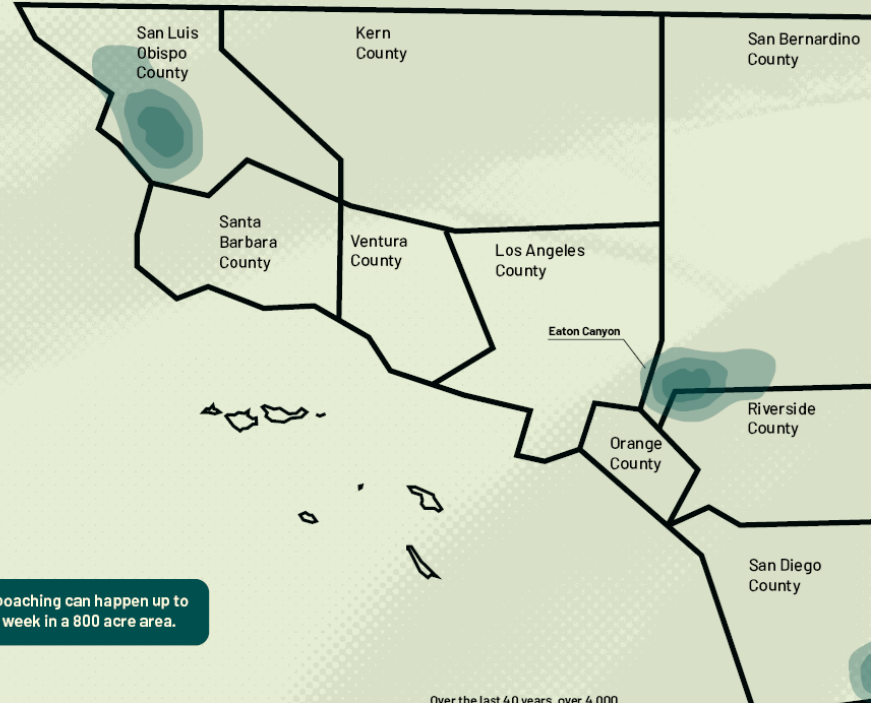
### Where it grows



\*Data taken from JuniperRidge store locations\*

## SoCal White Sage Poaching

Amazon alone has over 1000 product listings for white sage. None of their sources are fully disclosed and only are listed as "sustainably sourced".



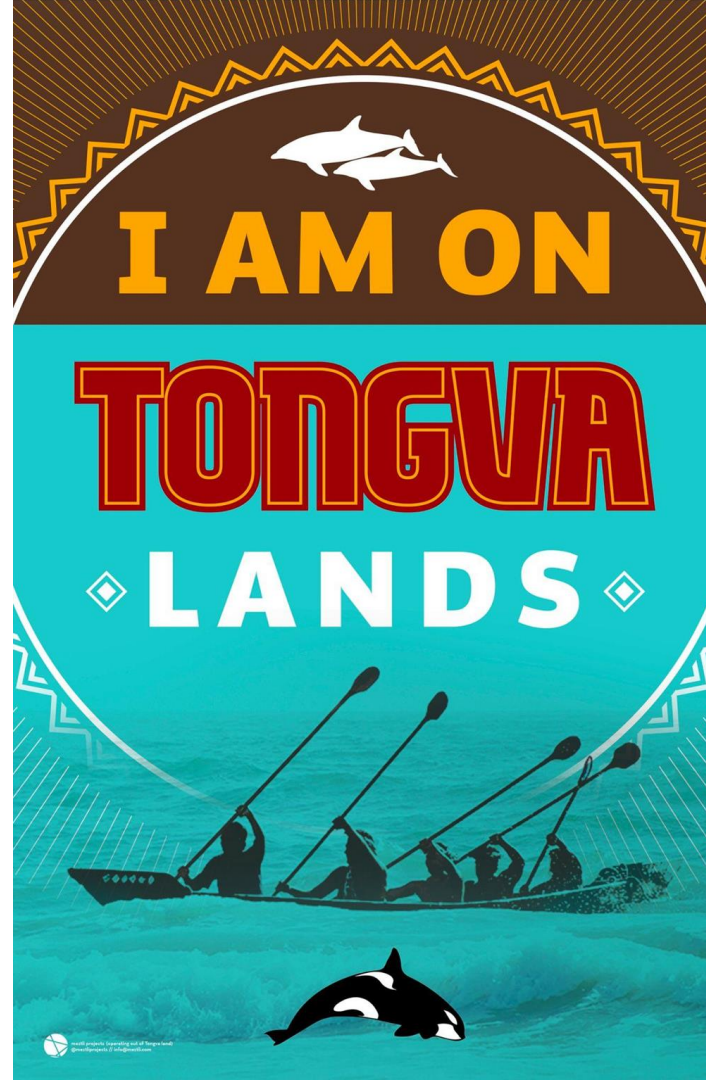
White sage poaching can happen up to 5-6 days per week in a 800 acre area.

Over the last 40 years, over 4,000



“The Peoples’ Land”

<https://tongva.land/>





POACHING  
TRAFFICKING,  
CULTURAL APPROPRIATION  
HARMFUL REPRESENTATION

WHEN WORKING WITH ETHICAL PROJECTS  
BE READY TO PIVOT & DISCARD IDEAS

What is it  
exactly we  
are entitled  
to access?

STANDING  
ROCK  
SERVED AS A  
CATALYST  
FOR SMUDGING'S  
POPULARIZATION

DO YOUR  
RESEARCH  
ON POSSIBLE  
DELIVERABLES

as artists  
we have  
the ability  
to uplift  
other voices  
through  
our work.

UPLIFT  
THE  
DIVERSITY  
OF  
CALIFORNIA

# WHITE SAGE KASALI

Tending  
& Reciprocity

Old growth  
cultures, like  
old growth  
forests,

Mediterranean  
Climate

"Wilderness"  
&  
Erasure

- "Preserving" is removing native practices
- Stealing biological wealth of the land

→ no reparation  
green tended  
land &

# Ecological Concepts

**Habitat Connectivity**

**Plant Communities**

**Structural Diversity**

**Species Diversity**

**Co-evolution**

**Poaching Connections  
to Habitat Degradation**



# Indigenous Frameworks

**Plant People and Relatives**

**Language Use/Shifts**

**Cultural Framing**

**Aesthetics**

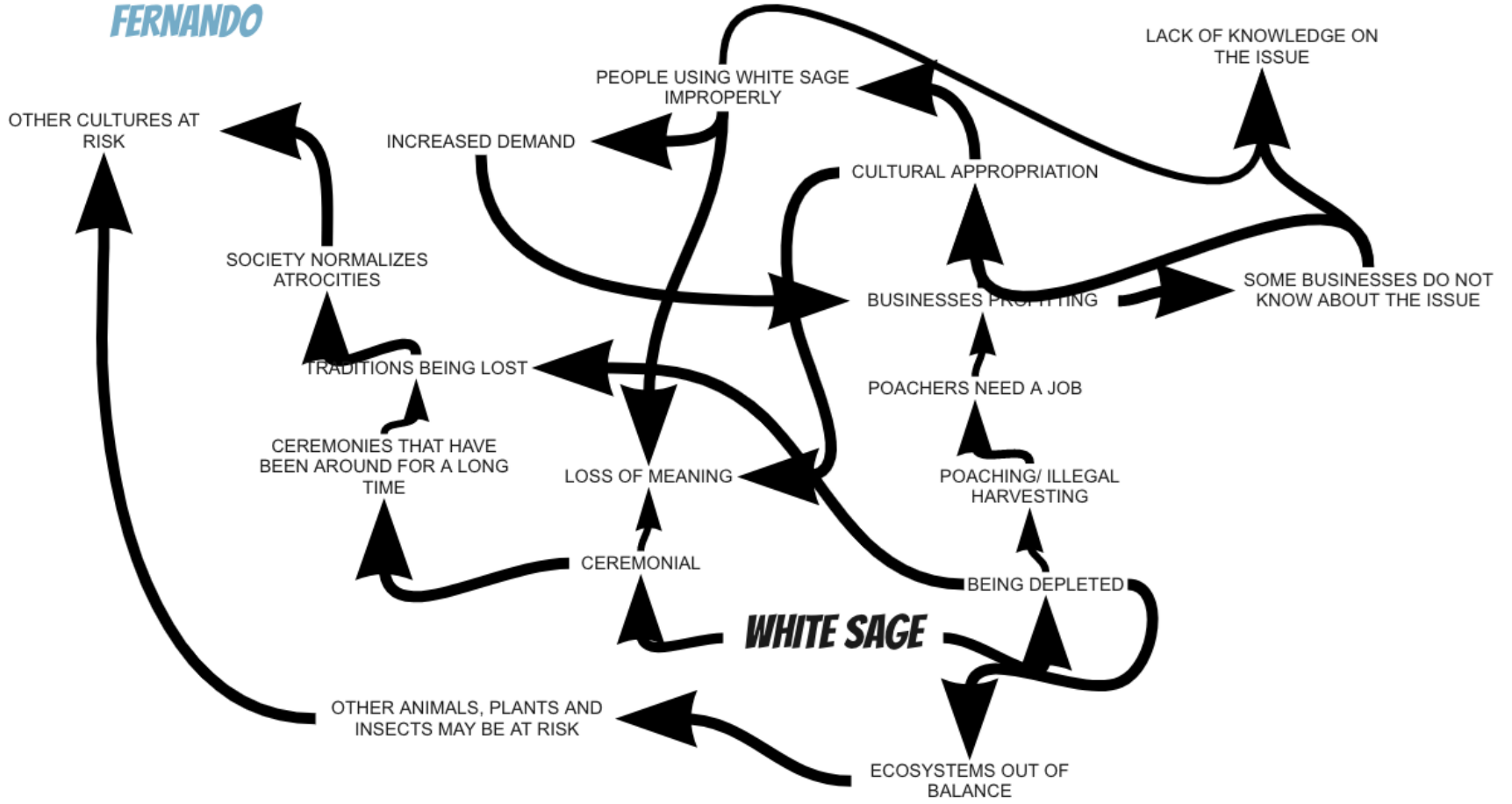
**Interconnectivity**

**Reciprocity**

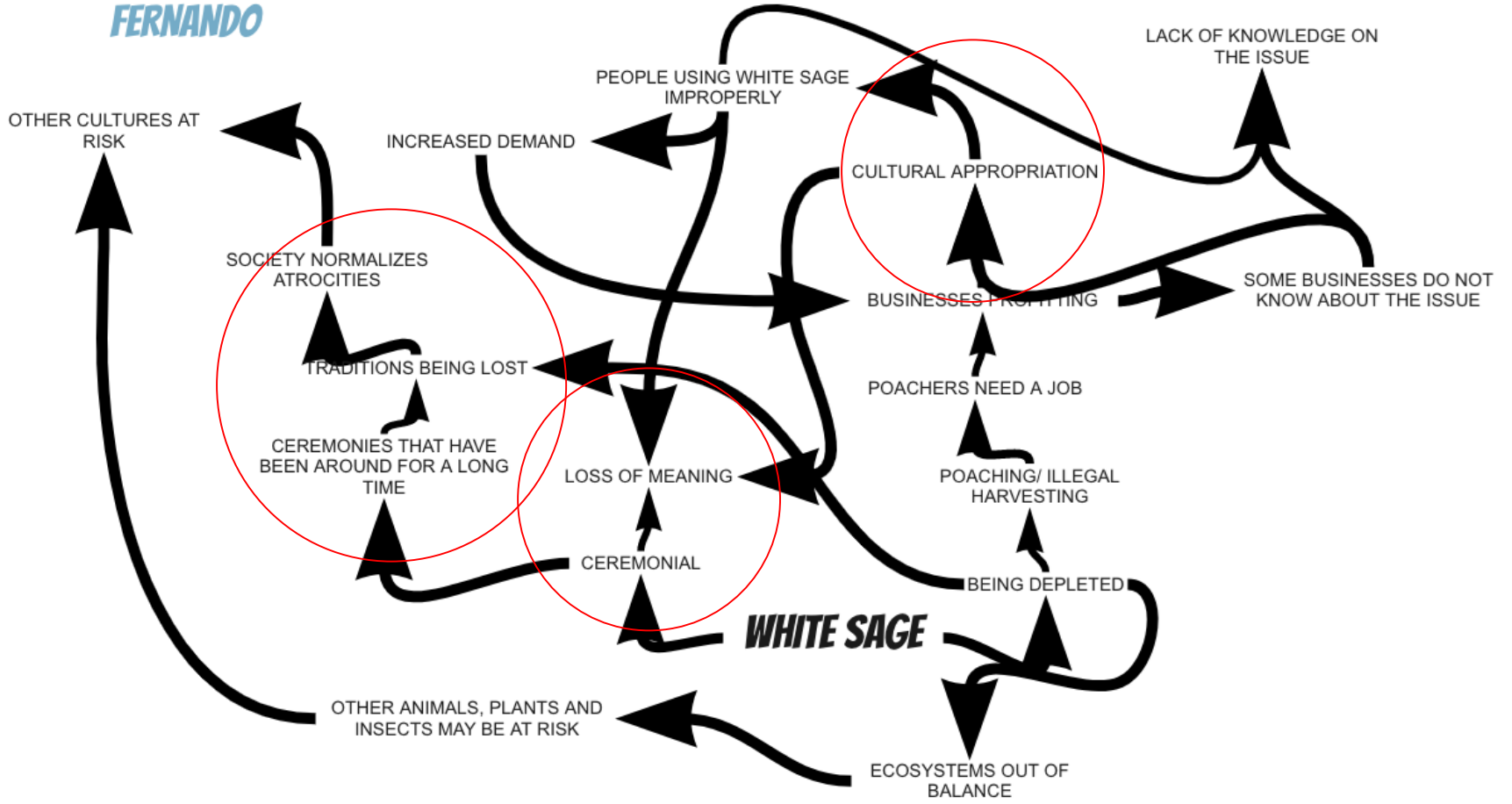
**Tending Nature**



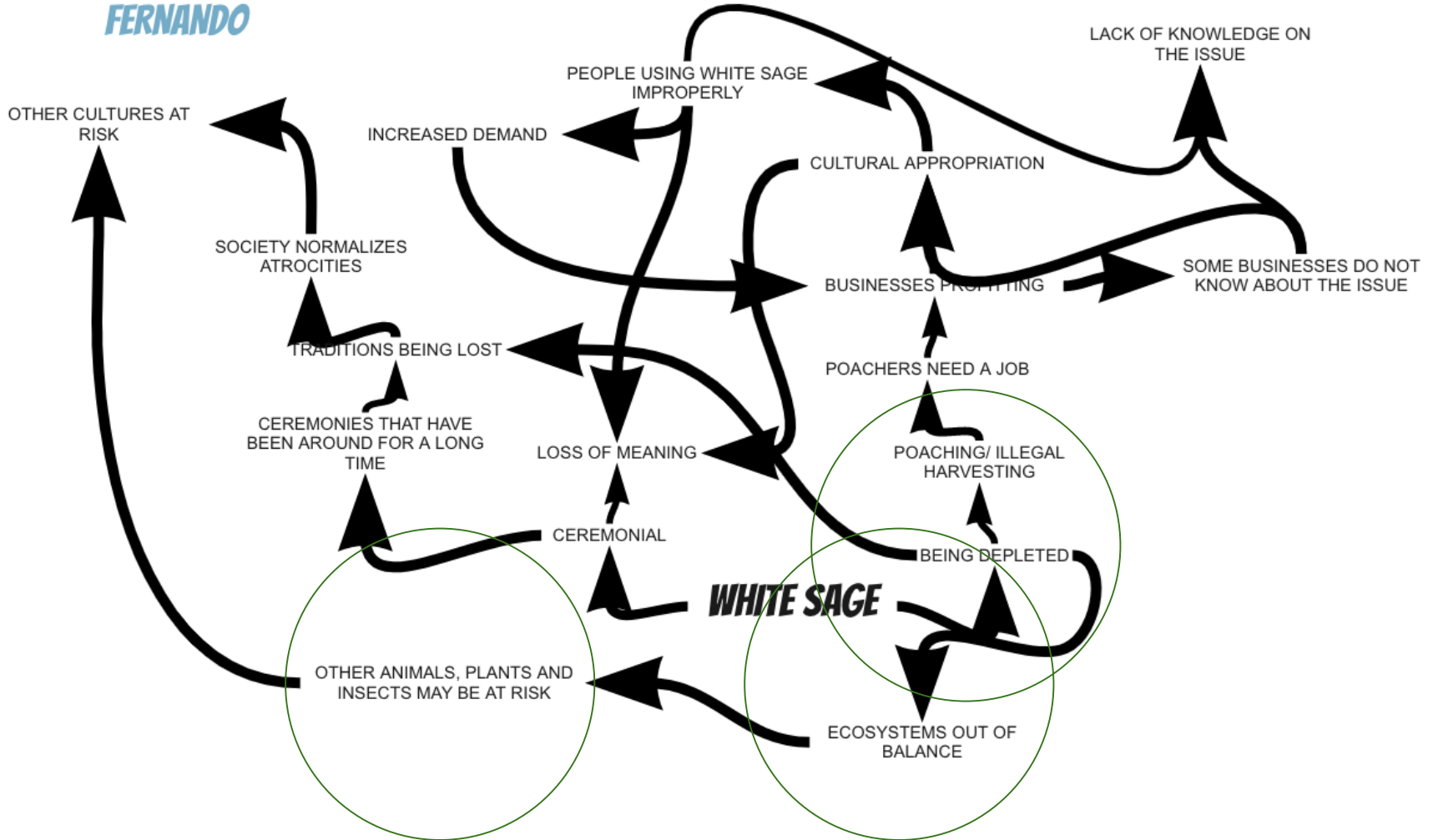
**FERNANDO**



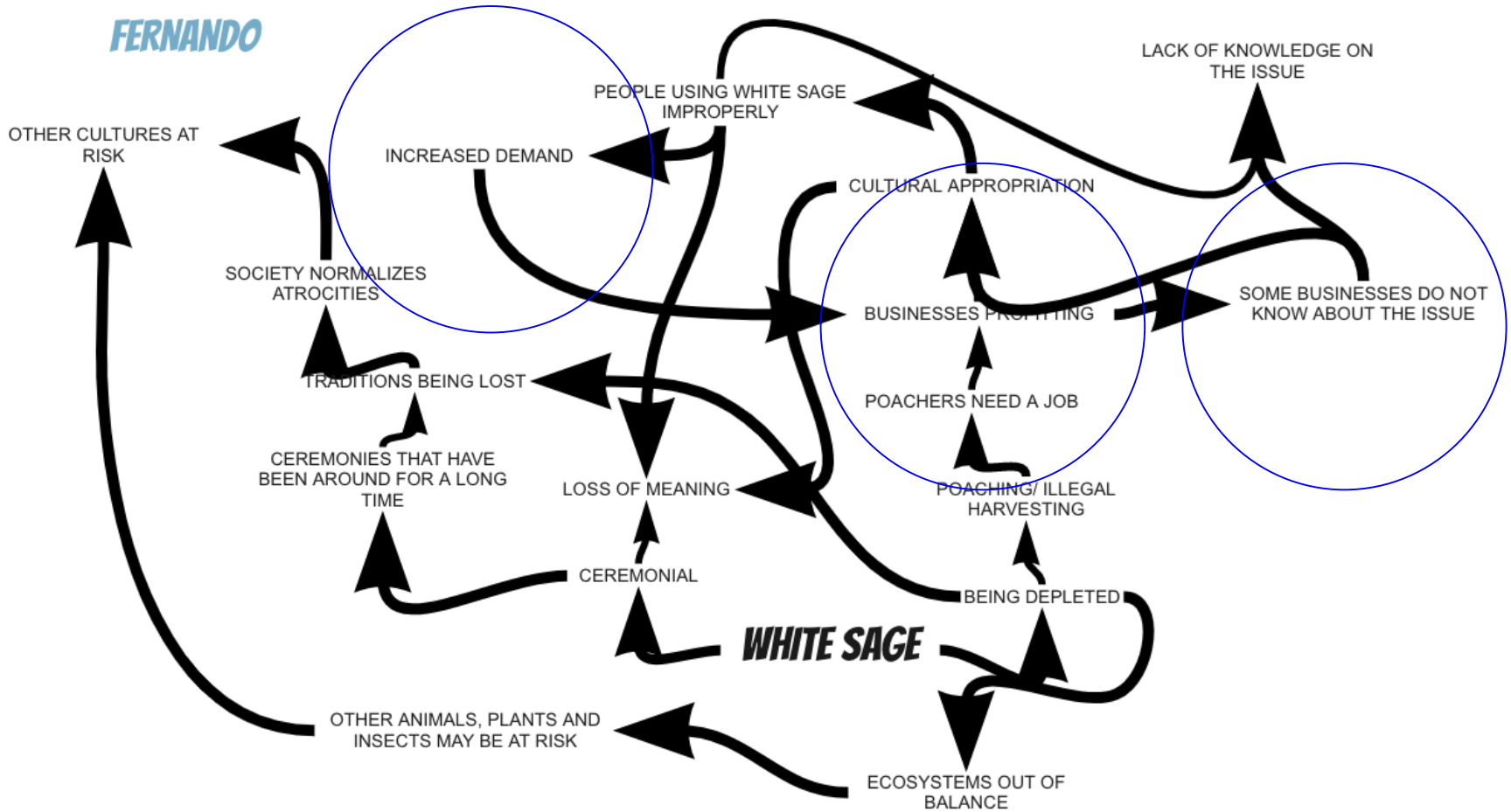
**FERNANDO**



# FERNANDO



**FERNANDO**



# Project Engagements to Protect White Sage

## Youth Engagement

*Social Media and Store campaign*

Megan Pantiskas

[MEGANPANTISKAS@GMAIL.COM](mailto:MEGANPANTISKAS@GMAIL.COM)

## Advocacy

*Poaching Maps campaign*

Jamil Watson

[jamilwt.design@gmail.com](mailto:jamilwt.design@gmail.com)

## Built Environment

*Native Habitat for Grand Park campaign*

Fernando Vazquez

[Vazquezfer2096@gmail.com](mailto:Vazquezfer2096@gmail.com)




# Poaching Maps campaign

## Jamil Watson

**"More profitable than weed"**

**-Ron Goodman**  
San Bernardino County park ranger

To learn more, visit [www.cnps.org/conservation/white-sage](http://www.cnps.org/conservation/white-sage)



### Global Distribution

In the 1920s, the bird movement popularized the use of white sage but white sage appropriation has been worsened by airlines and whiteloft movements along with misrepresentation in broadcast media and social media.

**Where it grows**

**Where it goes**

Amazon stores has over 1000 product listings for white sage. None of their sources are fully disclosed and only are listed as "sustainably sourced".

### SoCal White Sage Poaching

There are no official recordings or mapping by law enforcement to track poaching activity, making large gaps in data about how often white sage is poached from its environment.

White sage poaching can happen up to 9-12 days per week in a 500-acre area.

Over 1000 disabled migrants workers are often employed to dig up poached white sage. While they only get paid pennies on the dollar, white sage can go for 20 dollars per pound and have 400+ pounds per daily harvest.

Over the last 40 years, over 4,000 acres of riparian habitat have been lost and 100,000 birds in riparian habitats have been lost.


**"More profitable than weed"**

**-Ron Goodman**  
San Bernardino County park ranger

**"Worth more than gold"**

**-Nic Hummingbird**  
Indigenous activist and California native sage expert

To learn more, visit [www.cnps.org/conservation/white-sage](http://www.cnps.org/conservation/white-sage)



# Depletion

## Global Distribution

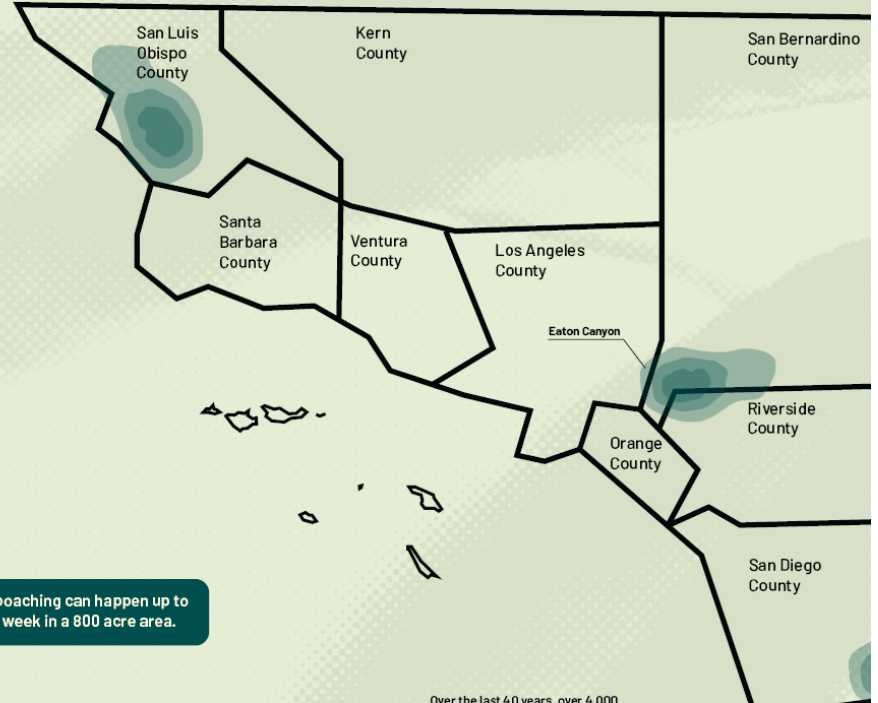
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\*Data taken from JuniperRidge store locations\*

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## *Social Media and Store campaign*

### *White Sage Protectors*

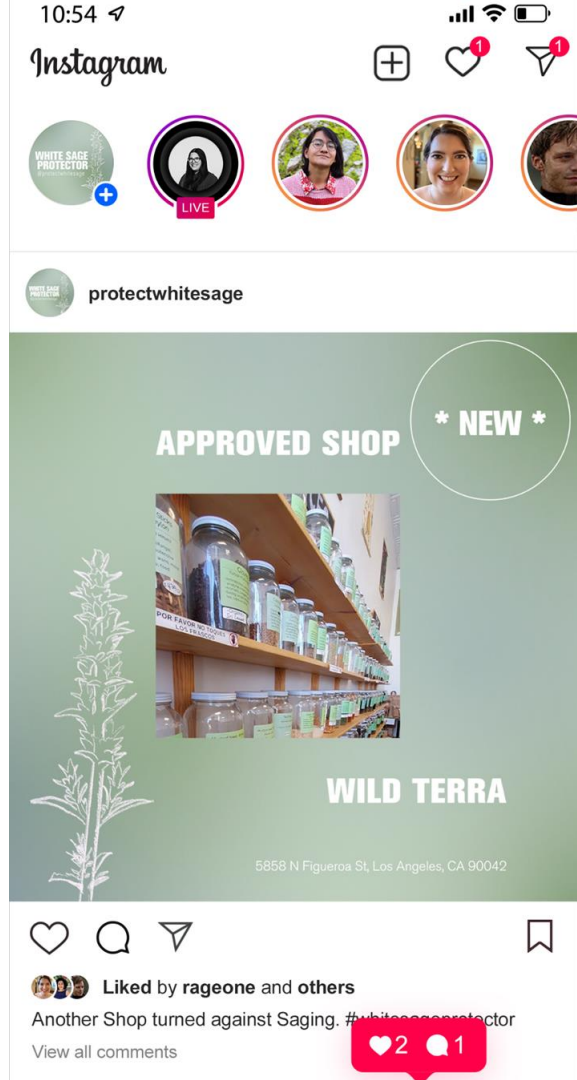
Megan Pantiskas

[MEGANPANTISKAS@GMAIL.COM](mailto:MEGANPANTISKAS@GMAIL.COM)

- prevent consumers from purchasing unethically obtained White Sage
- educate them on the topic



*Social Media  
and  
Store campaign*  
**White Sage Protectors**  
**Megan Pantiskas**  
[MEGANPANTISKAS@GMAIL.COM](mailto:MEGANPANTISKAS@GMAIL.COM)





# WHITE SAGE IS BEING

## **CULTURALLY APPROPRIATED**

White Sage is a sacred herb and medicine for the Tongva people, it often gets misappropriated as well as misused.

## **POACHED**

A majority of White Sage on the market is poached from its natural habitat - Southern California and Baja Mexico.

## **DESTROYED**

Poachers of White Sage take too much and harms the plant. Their actions harm the environment and prevents white sage from growing to its full height.

## **SOLD**

White Sage loses its power when sold, it must be given as a gift.

@protectwhitesage

# SMUDGING KILLS CULTURES

@protectwhitesage

# Reframing Grand Park: Native Habitat for DTLA

## Complete layout



## CIVIC PARK DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

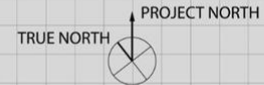
LOCATION:  
34.055171, -118.245086

PLANTING PLAN  
BLOCK 3

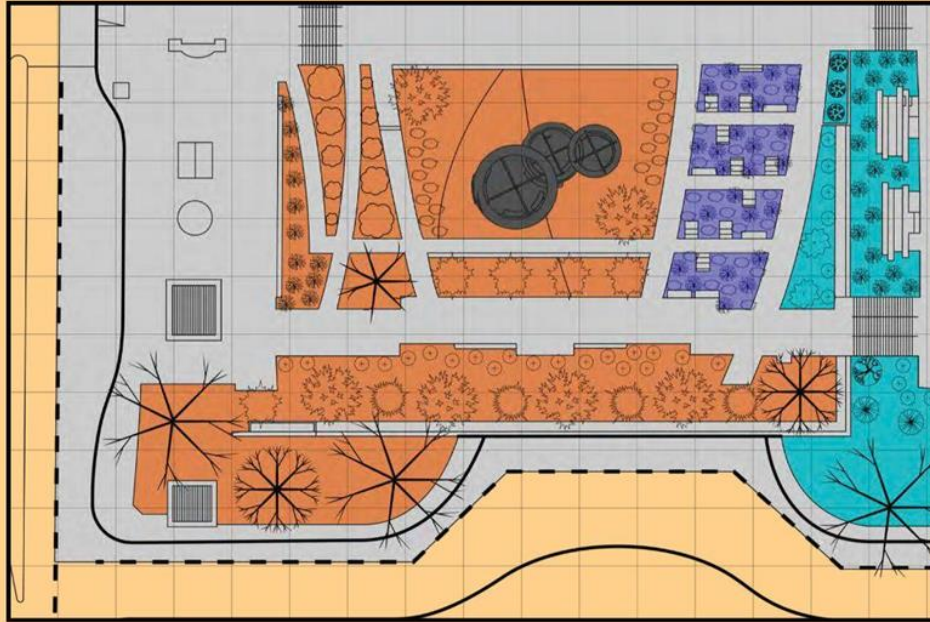
DECEMBER 9, 2022

SCALE: 1" = 20'

- 1.25" = 25'
- 1" = 20'
- .5" = 10'
- .25" = 5'



Fernando Vazquez  
[Vazquezfer2096@gmail.com](mailto:Vazquezfer2096@gmail.com)



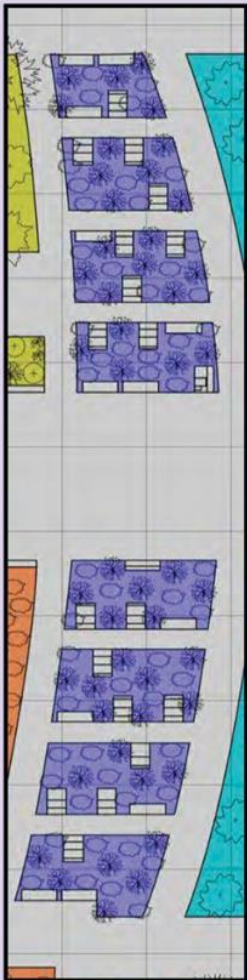
## Orange zone

- Several denser and taller trees at the perimeter of the park.
- The arrangement of the shrubs is to create a sense of shelter for people and wild birds.

Plants in the area:

- Laurel Sumac
- Western Sycamore
- Blue Elderberry
- Fremont Cottonwood
- Lemonade Berry
- California Sagebrush
- California Coffeeberry
- Bush Sunflower
- Scrub Oak





## Purple zone plants for small spaces

- Limited planting surface area
- Area calls for short and dense plants.

Plants in the area:

- Bush Sunflower
- Buckwheat



before  
after







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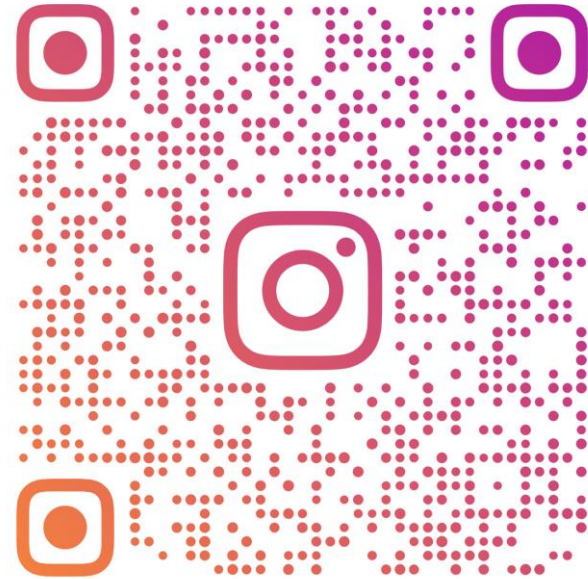
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*Follow Our Work on Instagram*  
**@blockstewards**



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