When I began researching this book in 2018, I was thinking about these questions: To what extent can forests really save us? And how? At the time, I was focused on their ability to sequester carbon and the increasing interest in natural climate solutions that was (and still is) motivating more tree planting. In researching and writing this story, I wanted to reconcile the competing viewpoints regarding the potential of forests to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere. Yet, throughout my travels and interviews, people around the world also showed me the many other ways that trees support our wellbeing and life on Earth. These treekeepers taught me about the great effort and care involved in *growing* trees—not just planting them—and in sustaining forests over time.

Whether you're a concerned citizen or a tree lover, an employee at a company or organization, a student, or a government leader, I hope this guide encourages you to reflect on the ways that people can work together toward a more forested future. It should enhance discussion of this book in a variety of settings and help readers appreciate both the urgency and complexity of treekeeping today.

Lauren E. Oakes
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1. How would you describe your outlook on the potential of trees to sequester more carbon into the future? Did reading TREEKEEPERS make you more or less optimistic about the role forests can play in combatting the climate crisis?

2. In what ways do trees affect your own health and wellbeing?

3. Through shared experiences with her son, Oakes explores the concept of shifting ecological baselines. She also describes an appreciation of nature as instinctual and suggests the desire to protect it might be as well. If you were to look ahead by two or three generations in your family, what relationship do you think those children will have with forests? What might you expect? What do you hope to see?

4. How would you describe what a forest is? Did TREEKEEPERS change your perspective on that definition? When people talk about creating more forests, what kind of "forest" might you encourage and why?

5. Oakes discusses tree equity and the efforts to increase tree cover in urban areas (Chapter 8). Chris David at American Forests calls trees as "a fundamental right for everybody." How would you describe the tree cover in your own neighborhood? In what ways do you have

the ability for “nature contact” in your daily life, and do you think your community could benefit from more trees?

6. In Hawai’i, Keali’i Thoene says, “The restoration of human cultures is the same as the restoration of our natural systems” (Chapter 9). Oakes also reflects on Wangari’s Maathai’s words in *Replenishing the Earth*: “In the process of healing the Earth, we help ourselves” (Chapter 10). How do you see the potential of forests as restoring more balance for life—beyond addressing the carbon in our atmosphere?

7. *Removals*, or negative emissions, consist of a range of technologies and nature-based solutions that capture CO_2 and other greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and lock them away. *Reductions* are cuts in the harmful gases and particles that are released into the atmosphere, through efforts such as more fuel-efficient cars. Why are both reductions and removals critical to helping the world reach its climate goals?

8. The Society for Ecological Restoration offers a *restorative continuum*—a framework for thinking about a range of activities that can improve environmental conditions and reverse degradation (Chapter 10). How could restoring a functioning forest ecosystem through what Rachael Garrett describes as “justice-centered restoration” (Chapter 4, pg. 68) result in different outcomes than planting trees for carbon?

9. In Chapter 12, the author explores the history of payments for ecosystem services and carbon offsets to examine how markets for forest carbon credits operate today. She mentions a New Yorker cartoon from 1989 that mocks the sense that planting trees for carbon could absolve anyone of their pollution sins. Oakes also notes a TIME article that called one of the first initiatives to offset emissions through trees, “A healthy environmental equation.” What do you see as the “healthy” aspects of this strategy? What could people and other life on Earth gain from offsets initiatives that create forests? What are the persistent and problematic limitations?

10. Jill Wager stresses the importance of scaling seed production and collection efforts to supply the increasing demand for native species around the world (Chapter 13). Oakes describes the parallels between the history of protecting seed diversity for “food security” and this growing interest in “forest security.” What are some ways you might support a greater diversity of plant life in your local community or in a place you have visited?

11. Critics of forests as natural climate solutions suggest that increased wildfires mean trees are not reliable in the effort to halt climate change. For what reasons do you think the prevalence of climate-fueled wildfire might also be a rationale to accelerate reforestation efforts?

12. Throughout the book, Oakes explores the concern that there is not enough land available to support more forests. She also describes examples when forests support agricultural production or benefit other land uses—even in the urban context. To what extent do you think of forests as separate from or integrated with human communities?

13. What are some examples of people or communities you know that act as long-term stewards of trees and forests? What motivates, or incentivizes, our treekeepers?