



**CITY OF MONROVIA
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION
AGENDA REPORT**



DEPARTMENT: Public Services

MEETING DATE: July 12, 2016

PREPARED BY: Eugene Suk,
Hillside Wilderness Preserve Supervisor

AGENDA LOCATION: CC-3

TITLE: 2015-16 Canyon Park Outdoor Education Program Evaluation

OBJECTIVE: To provide the Community Services Commission with an evaluation of the 2015-16 Canyon Park Outdoor Education Program.

BACKGROUND: A component of Canyon Parks' mission is to provide quality environmental education programs that foster a respect, and appreciation for nature, and the outdoors. Staff is dedicated to providing interpretative based curriculum that connects the minds and hearts of the students to the natural and cultural resources found in the Monrovia foothills. Since 1997, Canyon Park has worked to meet requirements based on the California Science Standards. Working in coordination with the Monrovia Unified School District (MUSD), Canyon Park has fostered a relationship committed to providing students the opportunity to develop an in-depth connection with the natural and cultural heritage of the community.

Programming is available to all students, and school districts throughout Southern California. Through an agreement with the MUSD, only Monrovia students receive a grade level appropriate Activity Book, and use of the Cabin/Conference Center as an off-site classroom. Non-MUSD school tour groups receive identical programming with the exclusion of activity books, and use of the Cabin/Conference Center. To date, the non-Monrovia Schools have not requested activity books; however, books may be purchased for \$2.00 each. All schools have use of the Canyon Park Nature Center.

Through established fee's, staff is able to provide this beneficial program to all participating students. The cost of a hike-led educational tour is a minimum of \$120.00 (for up to 30 participants). For each additional participant (up to an additional 30 participants), a \$4.00 charge is added. The program is led by trained interpretive staff and includes a two hour program, use of the Canyon Park Nature Center, and hands on interactive tools and materials to enhance the educational experience.

ANALYSIS: The Outdoor Education Program was developed to meet the curriculum needs of Monrovia elementary schools. Currently all MUSD 1st - 5th grade students have the benefit of participating in the program.

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Summary of Educational Programs: The following information outlines the Outdoor Education program:

- **1st Grade – “Natural Real Estate”:** Students will learn and identify the meaning of environmental habitat. This is an introductory visit to our Park for students who have yet to experience the natural environment. This tour also teaches students about our natural habitat, and what plants and animals need related to shelter and space for survival.
- **2nd Grade – “Growing Pains”:** Students learn the relationship between plant, animal, and insect kingdoms, and how their lifecycles affect each other. MUSD classrooms are provided with caterpillar/butterfly kits to observe hands on metamorphic changes.
- **3rd Grade – “Foot Prints in the Canyon”:** Students will be exposed to the wilderness for the first time. Students will learn about plant and animal communities, and the history of cultural and natural resources within the park. This students will learn the basic needs and interdependency of all living things.
- **4th Grade – “Adapt, Migrate or Disappear”:** Students will gain an in-depth look at the biological mechanisms plants and wildlife use to survive in their habitat; including food, mobility, protection, temperature, and reproduction. Animal pelts, skulls, and games are used to demonstrate an animals need to “adapt, migrate or disappear.”
- **5th Grade – “Get into the Flow”:** Students will examine water’s effect on the eco-system. The exploration of the water-cycle provides an understanding of where water comes from, and which sources supply the Park’s year-round waterfall. Riparian vegetation and aquatic insects are examined to evaluate the health of the stream.

The following chart illustrates the number of students served over the past two years. MUSD student participation was 2,125 for fiscal year 2015-16, compared to 1,290 the previous year, and represents an increase of 835 students. The MUSD increase is attributed to additional programs created for 1st and 2nd grade students. Non-MUSD student participation decreased from 1,047 in 2014-15 to 785 in 2015-16. Staff attributes the decrease to the limited dates available, and the increased MUSD participation with Canyon Parks interpretive programs.

NUMBER OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PARTICIPANTS		
	2014-15	2015-16
MUSD Students	1,290	2,125
Non-MUSD students	1,047	785
Total Students	2,337	2,910

Fee Survey Comparisons: The following information highlights the fee survey findings. The survey extends from the San Gabriel Valley to the Los Angeles and San Bernardino County areas.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAM FEE SURVEY	
Agency	Cost Per Participant
All Los Angeles County Natural Areas	\$ 0.00
San Gabriel Canyon Outdoor Ed Center – (United States Forest Service USFS)	\$ 8.00
El Dorado Nature Center – Long Beach	\$ 7.00
Mary Vagle Nature Center – Fontana	\$ 5.00
Oak Canyon Nature Center – Anaheim	\$ 16.00
Average Per Student	\$ 7.00
Monrovia Canyon Park – Monrovia	\$ 4.00

The survey results indicate that the Canyon Park Outdoor Education fee of \$4.00 per student is below the survey average of \$7.00. Staff does not recommend increasing the fee. The \$4.00 per student fee is affordable for school districts and therefore allows for more youth participation.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT: The guided outdoor education programs support the Green Accords by allowing the students to have a personal connection with the environment. The 5th grade program *Get into the Flow*, encourages students to understand the process of the water cycle, and how conservation plays into the role of everyday life.

FISCAL IMPACT: Proposition A funds were used to renovate Canyon Park, therefore all school districts participating in the Outdoor Education Program are subject to the same fee as the Monrovia Unified School District. The following information illustrates the Environmental Education program revenue.

OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM REVENUE		
	2014-15	2015-16
Monrovia Unified School District	\$5,160	\$8,500
Non-MUSD School Districts	\$4,187	\$3,140
Total Revenue	\$9,347	\$11,640

The increase in MUSD revenue is attributed to the additional 1st and 2nd grade programming which allows additional participation.

Note: Monrovia Canyon Park Volunteers provided 200 hours of service to the Outdoor Education Interpretive Program in fiscal year 2015-16. Based on California’s rate cost, per volunteer hour, of \$27.00, Canyon Park Volunteers contributed \$5,400 in cost savings for this program.

PROGRAM COMMENTS:

1. Staff will expand publicity efforts of Canyon Park’s outdoor environmental education programs to non-Monrovia school districts to increase awareness and participation.

2. Staff will continue securing additional volunteer support to enhance the programs offered at little to no cost to the City. This cost savings both in hard costs and time, will allow staff to focus on park operations, patrols and maintenance.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Community Services Commission move to receive and file CC-3 2015-16 Canyon Park Outdoor Education Program Evaluation.

COMMISSION ACTION REQUIRED: If Community Services Commission concurs, the appropriate action would be a motion to: ***Receive and file CC-3 2015-16 Canyon Park Outdoor Education Program Evaluation.***