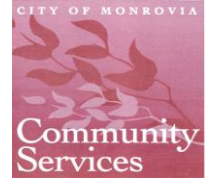




**CITY OF MONROVIA
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION
AGENDA REPORT**



DEPARTMENT: Community Services

MEETING DATE: May 13, 2014

PREPARED BY: Hector Inzunza
Senior Park Ranger

AGENDA LOCATION: AR-2

TITLE: 2012-13 Canyon Park Outdoor Educational Program Evaluation

OBJECTIVE: To provide the Community Services Commission with an evaluation of the 2012-13 Canyon Park Outdoor Education program.

BACKGROUND: A component of the Canyon Park mission statement is to provide quality environmental education programs that foster a respect and appreciation for the natural world. Staff is dedicated to providing interpretative based curriculum that connects the minds and hearts of the students to the natural and cultural resources of the Monrovia foothills. Since 1997, compliance to the California Science Standards and inclusive coordination with the Monrovia Unified School District (MUSD) has fostered a relationship committed to providing every third, fourth and fifth grade Monrovia student the opportunity to develop an in-depth affiliation with the natural and cultural heritage of the community. The program content is based on the California Science Standards. 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, none of the non-Monrovia Schools have requested activity books but if they did books could be purchased for \$2 each. All schools have use of the Canyon Park Nature Center.

Currently Canyon Park Outdoor Educational Programming remains unbudgeted. 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 \$90 (for up to 30 participants). For each additional participant (up to an additional 30 participants), a \$3 charge will be assessed. The program includes trained interpretive staff, a two hour program, use of Canyon Park Nature Center and educational materials.

ANALYSIS: The Outdoor Education Program was developed to meet the curriculum needs of Monrovia elementary schools. Currently all MUSD third, fourth and fifth grade students have the benefit of participating in the program. Canyon Park Staff have also developed Kindergarten through second grade environmental programs to meet the needs and requests of all elementary schools.

AR-2

Summary of Educational Programs:

The following information outlines the Outdoor Education program:

- **Kindergarten – “Unveiling Nature”**: Program encourages participants to discover their environment through sensory exploration. Games and hands-on displays actively guide participants through the functionality of sights, sounds, tastes, touch and smells that occur in a natural setting.
- **First Grade – “Natural Real Estate”**: Program encourages participants to discover components of what defines a habitat (food, water, shelter and space). Using magnification tools, participants explore microhabitats found along a guided hike. Participants then re-create an ecosystem using found objects.
- **Second Grade – “Growing Pains”**: Participants learn to understand the relationships between members of plant, animal and insect kingdoms and how their lifecycles affect each other.
- **Third Grade – “Foot Prints in the Canyon”**: Program is geared toward a students’ first time exposure to a wilderness area. Knowledge of plant and animal communities and history of cultural and natural resources within the park provides the students with an understanding of the basic needs and interdependency of all living things.
- **Fourth Grade – “Adapt, Migrate or Disappear”**: Program provides students with 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 interdependency.
- **Fifth Grade – “Get into the Flow”**: Designed for students to examine water’s effect on the eco-system. The exploration of the water-cycle provides an explanation of where the 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 1,350 for fiscal year 2012-13, down 202 participants compared to 1,552 the previous year. The MUSD decline is based on the decline in pupil registration during the 2012-13 school year. Non-MUSD student participation increased slightly from 1,489 in 2011-12 to 1,502 in 2012-13.

NUMBER OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PARTICIPANTS		
	2011-12	2012-13
MUSD Students	1,552	1,350
Non-MUSD students	1,489	1,502
Total Students	3,041	2,852

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 due a limited number of similar programs to survey in neighboring cities.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAM FEE SURVEY	
Agency	Cost Per Participant
All Los Angeles County Natural Areas	\$0
San Gabriel Canyon Outdoor Ed Center – (United States Forest Service USFS)	\$8
El Dorado Nature Center – Long Beach	\$6
Mary Vagle Nature Center - Fontana	\$5
Oak Canyon Nature Center - Anaheim	\$6
Average Per Student	\$5
Monrovia Canyon Park - Monrovia	\$3

The survey results indicate that the Canyon Park Outdoor Education fee of \$3 per student is below the survey average of \$5.

Though school districts continue to struggle with fiscal impacts from the state budget which limits their ability to pay for educational field trips and science programs, staff is confident that a modest increase of \$1 per student to \$4 will not be cost prohibitive to schools. The recommended \$4 per student fee is still below the average but, A.) brings Monrovia closer to the average and B.) will not deter school districts from participating (based on feedback from MUSD Administration). Canyon Park has not had a fee increase for this program in 15 years.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT: The guided outdoor educational programs support the Green Accords by allowing the students to have a personal connection with the environment. The fifth 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		
	2011-12	2012-13
Monrovia Unified School District	\$4,656	\$4,050
Non-MUSD School Districts	\$4,467	\$4,506
Total Revenue	\$9,123	\$8,556

The decrease in MUSD revenue is directly related to the decrease in participation.

Note: Monrovia Canyon Park Volunteers provide staff support to the outdoor education program. Volunteers gave approximately 120 hours to the Outdoor Education Interpretive Program in fiscal 2012-13. Based on a staff cost of \$15.51 per hour, times 120 volunteer hours, the Volunteers provided a staff cost savings of \$1,861.

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 augment existing staff. This will decrease staff cost and will allow staff to focus on park operations, patrols and maintenance.

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Increase program fees from \$3 per student to \$4 per student (or \$120 minimum.)
2. Maintain all existing fees.
3. Direct staff to explore other options

OPTIONS: The Community Services Commission has the following options to consider:

1. Accept the program recommendations as outlined in this report.
2. Accept one or more of the program recommendations as outlined in this report.
3. Direct Staff to explore other program options.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Community Services Commission move to accept option number one as outlined in this report.

COMMISSION ACTION REQUIRED: If Community Services Commission concurs, the appropriate action would be a motion to: ***Accept option number one, accept the program recommendations as out lined in this report.***