



Santa Clara Valley Water District

File No.: 18-0918

Agenda Date: 11/27/2018

Item No.: 7.2.

BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT:

Update on Education Outreach's Outdoor Classroom Program.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive information on educational programming at the District's outdoor classrooms.

SUMMARY:

Background

In August 2017, the Education Outreach team was reorganized under the new Water Education & Volunteer Program under the Office of Civic Engagement. The Education Outreach project's main goal is to engage students and youth from Pre-K through high school and college primarily through in-classroom lessons and presentations, but also through outdoor classroom tours, summer camp programming, library visits, District open houses, and youth-focused events.

During the 2017-18 school year, program staff reached over 13,400 students and 650 teachers in over 420 classrooms. This included 24 tours at our outdoor classrooms, including additional support of youth tours at the Silicon Valley Advanced Water Purification Center (SVAWPC), which has been integrated into, and streamlined under, the Water Education & Volunteer Program. Education Outreach staff also supported more than 120 First Lego League student teams and hosted three separate teacher trainings focused on environmental education to further the reach of students through their teachers. In addition, over 3,700 contacts were made through public outreach events staffed by the Education Outreach Team. Overall, the program engaged with 17,783 contacts.

Education Outreach Team

New to the team this year is Mera Burton, the program's new Education Outreach Coordinator. Ms. Burton is an experienced and credentialed STEM teacher who taught math and science in both Palo Alto & East San Jose schools and who most recently ran NASA's educational outreach programs prior to coming to the District. The team is further complemented by Janet Hedley, a veteran environmental sciences educator and Marta Lugo, Supervising Program Administrator, who has led water education and outreach programs for the District's Recycled Water Tour program, and has prior youth development work experience.

The Education Outreach team is also supported throughout the year by college interns and temporary workers. In 2018, the program had up to eight year-round and summer interns and one

temp who are an integral part of the presentation team. The team is extremely capable of developing and supporting outdoor classroom programs in addition to the school, library and summer camp programming as part of a single cohesive and holistic program that delivers high quality environmental stewardship and water education.

Outdoor Classrooms

Currently, the program uses five outdoor classroom spaces in the county for educational presentations. The District-owned facilities include the Alamitos and Coyote Creek outdoor classrooms in San Jose, and the Alviso Educational Center Outdoor Classroom in Alviso.

The District also has an informal arrangement to use the Edith Morley Park Outdoor Classroom in Campbell, which is owned and managed by the City of Campbell, and the Coyote Valley Open Space Preserve and Outdoor Classroom in Morgan Hill, which is owned and operated by the Santa Clara Valley Open Space District (OSA). These two facilities are freely accessible to the public. Requests for the use of these open space facilities are coordinated with these agencies ahead of time to ensure availability.

During FY18, Education Outreach staff provided 29 tours that engaged 938 students, 47 teachers, educators, and 61 members of the public in water education programs. 24 tours were at our existing five outdoor classroom locations and 5 tours were at the purification center. This was in addition to the regular classroom presentations and other programming the team carried out. The team has also organized several public events and tours at the District’s on campus Alamitos Outdoor Classroom over the years, such as hosting over 100 FIRST Lego League participants during 2017 and an annual Youth Stewardship Open House Tour that was organized as far back as June 2014.

Outdoor Classroom Usage FY12 - FY19

Outdoor Classroom/Tour Site	FY19*	FY18	FY17	FY16	FY15	FY14	FY13	FY12	TOTAL
Alamitos Outdoor Classroom (D4)	0	14	16	10	5	12	13	9	79
Alviso Outdoor Classroom (D3)	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Coyote Creek Outdoor Classroom (D2)**	2	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	8
Coyote Valley Open Space Outdoor Classroom (D1)***	0	2	1						3
Edith Morley Outdoor Classroom (D4)	2	6	7	4	0	1	1	1	22
TOTAL	4	24	24	16	6	16	14	11	115

* FY19 numbers reflect Q1

** FY17 & FY18 Numbers for Coyote Creek reflect the impact of the flooding along Coyote Creek, in FY19 EO have tours of Coyote Creek scheduled in October and November

*** Coyote Valley Open Space Outdoor Classroom did not come online until FY17

During FY18, many of the requests for use of these facilities have come from schools, scouting groups, and other organizations such as First Lego League, youth camps and home schools.

Currently, field trips for Outdoor Classrooms are promoted through website advertising as well as the distribution of printed brochures in schools and community spaces such as libraries, community centers, and other public spaces and events.

As well as providing educational presentations traditionally referred to as 'tours' at the five outdoor classrooms and supporting youth tours at the purification center, Education Outreach also provides and supports tours of the Water Quality Testing Lab and supports tours at district open house events at our water treatment centers and project locations.

Next Steps

During this current fiscal year, staff will actively work towards increasing programming of outdoor classrooms through additional promotion and advertising and targeted outreach to teachers, educators, youth groups and city Parks & Recreation Departments.

Staff is actively looking at ways to further promote and advertise the program using social media, blogs and targeted outreach to local schools, educators, youth groups and community groups with targeted information about the program, including transportation information.

Staff will also explore community partnerships, using Safe, Clean Water Partnership funds and other mechanisms, with cities, school districts, businesses and particularly with agencies in close proximity to the sites that have traditionally generated little interest to increase usage. The Alviso Outdoor Classroom for instance has a Senior Center, a Boys and Girls Club and an Elementary School nearby. Education Outreach staff have recently connected with the SEAL Coach (Sobrato Early Academic Language) at George Mayne and Scott Lane Elementary Schools and are discussing field trip opportunities to the Alviso Outdoor Classroom.

Staff is also recruiting volunteers to increase its capacity to offer such programs.

Programming some sites however poses some challenges. Teachers, in informal surveys have indicated to us that one of their main barriers to visiting Outdoor Classrooms is being able to absorb the costs for transporting their students to the sites. Staff is exploring the possibility of offering transportation stipends as mini-grants and/ or through other funding mechanisms.

Other challenges include: locations such as the Coyote Creek Outdoor Classroom not having bathroom facilities on site and requiring extensive cleaning and beautification due to recent flood damage; continued general maintenance as well as appropriate maintenance and upkeep of bathrooms at Coyote Valley Open Space Outdoor Classroom. Staff is exploring possible short and long term solutions to these problems.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Further analysis is necessary to determine the financial impacts associated with supporting additional personnel, transportation stipends, porta potty use at Coyote Creek Outdoor Classroom and beautification efforts at the same site.

CEQA:

The recommended action does not constitute a project under CEQA because it does not have a potential for resulting in direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: PowerPoint

UNCLASSIFIED MANAGER:

Rick L. Callender, 408-630-2017