



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: August 28, 2019
TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Creeks Division, Parks and Recreation Department
SUBJECT: Youth Watershed Education Update

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission receive a report on the Creeks Division's Youth Watershed Education programs.

DISCUSSION:

The mission of the Creeks Restoration and Water Quality Improvement Division (Creeks Division) is to improve creek and ocean water quality and restore natural creek systems through storm water and urban runoff pollution reduction, creek restoration, and community education programs.

The Creeks Division administers a variety of community education and outreach programs throughout the year, designed to increase awareness of the causes of and actions to help prevent water pollution, foster community stewardship of our local creeks, watershed, and ocean, and communicate the efforts of the Creeks Division to the residents of Santa Barbara. These efforts include television, radio, online, print, and bus advertisements, social media, community events, project-related outreach such as tours and ribbon cuttings, and targeted campaigns related to specific pollutants such as pet waste ("Close the Poop Loop") and pesticides ("Our Water Our World").

Outreach efforts are guided by the Creeks Division's Public Education Plan, as well as the City's Storm Water Management Program (SWMP), which outlines measurable goals that must be met each year including youth education, event participation, and media campaigns.

Youth education is a key component of the Creeks Division's outreach efforts. By providing clear and engaging activities for youth regarding the importance of clean water and the causes of creek and ocean pollution, these programs help students to develop an appreciation of our local watersheds and to adopt appropriate behaviors to protect and improve our environment.

Explore Ecology Programs

The Creeks Division contracts with Explore Ecology to provide free youth watershed education to students in kindergarten through twelfth grade in the City of Santa Barbara. The Creek Kids series consists of two in-class presentations, a field trip to a local creek, and a visit to the Watershed Resource Center (WRC) at Arroyo Burro County Beach Park, where students also participate in a beach clean-up. The students learn about watersheds, creeks, marine debris, sources of water pollution, and what they can do to help improve local water quality. Standalone presentations and/or field trips are also available for teachers who are unable to schedule the full Creek Kids series. In Fiscal Year 2019, over 4,000 students participated in Explore Ecology programs sponsored by the Creeks Division.

Explore Ecology programs are correlated to state standards and updated regularly to address teachers' suggestions as well as new pollutants of concern and water quality issues. In addition to providing youth watershed education programs within the City, Explore Ecology is under contract with the County of Santa Barbara to provide similar programs to schoolchildren in other areas in the County. The Creeks Division's contract with Explore Ecology includes a partnership with Santa Barbara County to fund a part-time staff person to manage and administer the Watershed Resource Center at Arroyo Burro Beach.

Additional Youth Education Opportunities

Creeks Division staff are available to provide presentations and project tours to youth in our community upon request. The Creeks Division also offers volunteer opportunities for students throughout the year, providing hands-on, in the field educational experiences. In recent years staff have worked on volunteer efforts with students from Santa Barbara High School, San Marcos High School, Peabody Elementary School, and Cate School, and local teen service organizations including Tomorrows Green and Boys Team Charity. When scheduling allows, Creeks Division staff have also provided tours and volunteer events for Parks and Recreation Nature Camp participants.

The Creeks Division also participates in and hosts community events throughout the year such as the Earth Day Festival and Creek Week, which provide great opportunities for staff to educate children and adults about our local watersheds and how to protect creek and ocean water quality.

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