

Resource Conservation District of Ventura County
Environmental Education Outreach Program
Progress Report – Amgen
June 2008



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Environmental Education Areas of Development for Ventura County

Science Education:

The Education and the Environment Initiative (EEI) was signed into law in 2003 and mandates the development of a unified strategy to bring education about the environment in California's k-12 schools. There will be a total of around 100 curriculum units across k-12 grade levels that will bring environmental education into the public schools. Integrating education about the environment into our school system will make instruction relevant to today's world and prepares students to be knowledgeable leaders and consumers who can make informed decisions about California's future. Bottom line, this initiative is an exciting plan to bring more much needed environmental education into our classroom.

As the Network Coordinator for the California Regional Environmental Education Community (CREEC) in Ventura County I am responsible for educating the Environmental Education Providers (EEP) about the EEI. This is done by personal visits as well as by holding workshops in the region to assist Providers in aligning their educational programs to the EEI Model Curriculum Plan. As CREEC Coordinator, I held an EEI Workshop at the Ventura County Offices of Education on June 2. I provided instruction and helped EE Providers fill out the EEI Audit Tool that looks at the criteria determining if their instructional materials for k-12 schools will support EEI. The audit tool acts as a catalyst in the EEI process to ensure EE Providers align their programs to the Environmental Principles & Concepts. The EEI is a crucial ingredient to the school system in educating our youth on current natural systems. It is also an important and effective marketing tool for EEP when teachers are introduced to EEI and know that the Environmental Providers are a valuable local resource in supporting their efforts to teach the EEI units. As the EEOC I provide a key component in the whole EEI objective process and timeline.

Related Documents:

- Education & Environment Initiative – CA Environmental Principles and Concepts – (1)
- EEI Instructional Materials/Program Audit Tool Document – (2)
- EEI Curriculum Timeline – (3)
- Photographs of the EEI workshop on June 2

CREEC Network - California Regional Environmental Education Community:

CREEC's mission is to develop a communication network, which provides educators with access to high quality environmental education resources to enhance the environmental literacy of California Students. As the Regional Coordinator for Ventura County I am responsible for holding regional EEI workshops and individually visiting EE providers whom could not attend. I also identify, collect, edit and approve providers and their programs and resources which are available in Ventura County. In addition, I am responsible for updating the Ventura Region's calendar of events, newsletters, student contests and funding opportunities.

Related Documents:

- CREEC Network and Ventura County Regional Mission Statement – (4)

Environmental Education Areas of Development in Ventura County

Environmental Education Providers Leadership Consortium:

As the New Environmental Education Outreach Coordinator (EEOC) for the Resource Conservation District I held Ventura County's first Environmental Educators Consortium Meeting on January 17, 2008. Over 40 Environmental Education Providers attended the meeting at Faulkner Farm in Santa Paula. The main objective of the first meeting was to create a platform and venue for Environmental Education Providers to collaborate and discuss key issues facing Environmental Education in the county and in Southern California. Agenda topics included introductions of all EE Providers present, network and outreach and goals moving forward. Guest speaker Sean Anderson, Assistant Professor of Environmental Science and Resources Management, from CSUCI spoke about wildlife corridors and connectivity issues in VC. The second meeting was held April 4, 2008 at the Channel Islands National Park Headquarters. The mission of EE Leadership Committee was devised – "Connecting Ventura County Kids to Nature". Several key issues are noted below. Two more meetings are scheduled for this year.

DISCUSSION TOPICS AND GOALS OF EE LEADERSHIP CONSORTIUM:

I. Key Issues Facing EE in Southern California

- Funding
- Duplication of Resources and Programs
- EEI - Mandated Instructional Time / Teaching to the Standards
- Branding EE
- Student Engagement
- Connecting Needs to Resources
- Academic Credibility
- Sharing Models of Success
- Marketing

II. Resources Needed

- Ventura County Wildlife Program
- Clean Energy – Climate Change Program
- COW Mobile – Conservation on Wheels Vehicle – mobile education lab that can visit schools - See picture

III. Needs

- Visionary to see tasks through to completion
- Grant literacy
- Environmental Education Tradeshow for Teachers

IV. Next Steps

- EEI Education and Evaluations
- Developing Needed Environmental Programs
- Continue Networking
- Matching Needs to Resources
- Marketing and Motivation
- Strategic Partnerships
- Engage Parents
- Avoid Duplication
- Create One Source for Needs and Resources
- Marketing and Motivation

Environmental Education Areas of Development in Ventura County

Environmental Ambassadors Program in Public Schools:

2007 - 2008 Ventura County School District Statistics:

School Districts – 21

Schools – 208

Student Enrollment – 142, 488

Educators – 6,720

With the help of the Ventura County Office of Education we have been in contact with 355 Ventura County Science Teachers. However, there are a limited amount of schools in the county that are truly environmentally active. We currently have 24 Science Teachers established as Environmental Ambassadors and our goal is to establish at least one teacher as an Environmental Ambassador or contact in every school. In turn they will foster environmental awareness, implement sustainability and conservation practices and possibly establish environmental student clubs.

Envirothon:

The California Envirothon is comprised of outdoor natural resource conservation education and a competition program for high school students in grades 9 – 12. In a field setting, students are challenged to work as a team while participating in hands-on training and testing focusing on environmental issues in the fields of wildlife, soils, forestry, aquatics and a changing current issue. Through a deeper knowledge of natural resources students will learn:

- Decision making skills
- Team building and communication skills
- How personal actions affect environmental problems negatively or positively
- The interaction and interdependence of natural resources
- Knowledge of resource materials, agencies, organizations available to assist them in environmentally related matters like the RCD and NRCS

In 2008 Ventura County did not have an Envirothon Team compete. I am presently organizing 3 teams for the 2009 CA Envirothon. I have solicited teachers creating interest. In addition, I am coordinating informational meetings; educating teachers on the different facets of Envirothon as well as coordinating natural resource workshops for students and teachers on the field environmental issues - wildlife, forestry and aquatics that are the focus of event.

Related documents:

- Canon Envirothon Brochure – (5)

Environmental Education Areas of Development in Ventura County

Star In Education Paper:

The Ventura County Star prints a special “Star In Education” paper dedicated to local interest topics inserted into the regular paper throughout the year. The primary focus of the Star In Education is to put newspapers in classrooms throughout Ventura County at no cost to schools and to teach students to be critical readers and thinkers as well as active members of their community. Over 199,000 papers are printed and several papers are shipped directly to 300 Ventura County Classrooms and Teachers grades K – 12. Teachers in turn use the paper as a special interest learning tool. The Resource Conservation District is sponsoring a Star In Education Paper called – “**Connecting Kids to Nature**” – “**An Environmental Education Resource Guide**”. Six Ventura County Environmental Educators will be featured depicting a good cross section from the broad total. The paper will also contain a page listing all EE Providers as well as a calendar displaying environmental events through the school year.

Related documents:

- Example of Star In Education Paper – “What’s Growin’ On?” – (6)
- Star In Education Program Description – (7)

Third Annual SummerFest 2008:

SummerFest brings Ventura County Children and our community together in a daylong event emphasizing healthy living and foods. This event celebrates our healthy community and also raises funds for nutrition and exercise programs through sponsorships. More than 4,000 children, teachers and families attended the event this year.

The Resource Conservation District contributed to the event by constructing an educational interactive gardening display. Over 200 kids participated by planting their own pumpkin, corn, bean and or squash seeds in peat pots that they were able to take home to plant, teaching them simple, but important gardening practices, healthy living and sustainability.

Related documents:

Picture of Summerfest – Interactive Garden Display

Annual Oxnard College Science Fair:

The fair is held at the Ventura County Fairgrounds and is sponsored by Oxnard College and the Coastal Chapter of The American Petroleum Institute (API). Hundreds of Ventura County elementary and middle school science students are invited to follow a "Treasure Hunt" of 80 exhibitor booths held in Santa Cruz Hall that offered information relating to career options and educational opportunities throughout a range of sciences. There were a wide variety of interactive displays and science professionals offering guidance in the fields of science, hybrid energy, math, health, conservation, agriculture, technology and engineering.

The Resource Conservation District participated by staffing an informational booth providing resources and literature on all the environmental educators in the county. We also participated in the “treasure hunt” by answering student’s questions about Resource Conservation and Ventura County’s Agriculture Issues.

Environmental Education Areas of Development in Ventura County

Upcoming Events:

Ventura County Fair August 2008:

The Resource Conservation District together with The Natural Resources Conservation Service will participate in the Agriculture and Natural Resources Section of the fair July 30 – August 10, 2008. The main objective is to educate the community on the important environmental issues facing Ventura County, including water quality, quantity and conservation, soil erosion and wildlife threats and endangered species statistics. During different days of the fair we intend to have different interactive educational activities for children, including a garden demonstration.

Environmental Education Tradeshow September 2008:

The Resource Conservation District will be hosting an Environmental Education Tradeshow at the Channel Islands National Park Headquarters. This venue will allow Environmental Education Providers to set up informational booths and exhibits for teachers. Teachers will be asked to sign up their classrooms for both EEP field trips and classroom programs. The goal is to encourage teachers to get their kids out of the classroom and to advantage of the environmental expertise of EE Providers.

Coastal Cleanup Day September 20, 2008:

Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup is the world's largest volunteer event of its kind. Thousands of volunteers participate from all over the globe, clearing tons of trash from oceans and waterways, and recording every piece of trash collected. Last year, 378,000 volunteers participated from 76 countries and 45 states. Worldwide, volunteers removed an average of 16 pounds of trash, per person.

The Resource Conservation District is in the process of organizing five volunteer student teams from a broad range of schools in the county.

Gold Coast Science Network Conference November 15, 2008:

The Conference offers educational opportunities to Ventura County as well as surrounding area teachers to hear speakers, attend workshops, and visit science exhibitors. The Conference would be a great outreach platform for the Resource Conservation District to promote the Environmental Education Programs to teachers in the county. In addition to informing the participants on the environmental issues facing the county, the CA Envirothon and volunteer opportunities.

Environmental Education Areas of Development in Ventura County

Needed and Proposed New Environmental Education Programs for Ventura County:

Ventura County has several environmental education programs supporting many crucial areas of environmental study including and not limited to agriculture, eco-systems, gardening, recycling/waste management, plants and animals and wetlands. However, there are certain important areas of study that are under utilized and need development. For instance, a wildlife program focusing on local Ventura County animals, their habitats and the corridor and connectivity issues these animals face in the year 2008 and Climate Change and Clean Energy Program offered to all schools.

Proposed Programs:

[Ventura County Wildlife, Corridors and Connectivity Educational Program](#) – Ventura County has several known and diverse wildlife species and habitat conditions. This project will provide formal and informal field education for grades k - 12. Supporting EEI learning objectives. During the modules the students will learn about their Ventura County Natural Habitat, including specific animal wildlife and environmental conditions. The students will attend outdoor environmental workshops covering animal wildlife in their own back yard, including, but not limited to: mountain lion, brown bear, coyote, raccoon, possum, grey squirrel; their migration patterns, corridors and the diverse and ever changing conditions facing them in the new millennium. With proper funding and collaboration with Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office and Wildlife Experience the Resource Conservation District could provide such a needed program.

2008 – 2009 - 2 ½ Hour Proposed Program would include:

- Detailed information on Ventura County Terrestrial Animal Species
- Activities that acquaint students with our local native animal species, including an introduction to animal tracking
- Hands on materials including animal skulls, teeth and scat models
- A nature-hike instructing students on animal corridors and connectivity issues – specifically what modern elements our local native animal species must endure in the year 2008

Environmental Education Areas of Development in Ventura County

Clean Energy – Vision for Cleaner Energy Educational In School Program:

The vast majority of scientists believe that human activities have played a significant part in the changing of the earth's temperature. The solutions to combat climate change will take the cooperation of business, industry and government as well as our own willingness as individuals to make sacrifices towards sustainability. Whilst we are riding a wave of public acknowledgment, there is still very little being done in the lives of everyday people to combat the effects of climate change.

Ventura County needs a Climate Change / Clean Energy Educational Program to inspire young learners to action, to open their minds to ways in which they, both individually and collectively, can make a positive difference to their world. The main objective will not only be to teach the crucial components of global warming, but to also call to action, to inspire, connect and teach students on how they can work with local corporations and industry. This International Alumni will work closely with local and global communities to affect personal change.

In order to offer an effective and truly inspiring Climate Change / Clean Energy Educational Program to Ventura County Students and Youth education and experience on our level at the Resource Conservation District is needed. This program would take two phases to accomplish.

Phase one of the program would be to take part in Robert Swan's 'Clean Energy Voyage' and Expedition to Antarctica in March 2009. Robert Swan and his Team 2041 launched the 'Voyage for Cleaner Energy' in San Francisco. The goal is to inspire young people to take action and make the necessary changes to ensure the preservation of our planet. On the Expedition the team of students sees for themselves the impact of Global Warming on the Great Ice-shelves. As a member of the 2041 Team I would learn, first hand the integral facets of climate change. I would catalog and visually document the Expedition with photographs and video.

Phase two of the program would entail taking the scientific knowledge from the Expedition back to Ventura County Classrooms by offering a Climate Change Educational Program. Recounting the experience through educational statistics and visual documentation will engage and inspire students and young people on the issue of the climate change and the use of renewable energy.

Robert has selected only highly motivated individuals to spend two weeks in Antarctica in March 2009. He believes I am one of those individuals! I have been offered this amazing opportunity to learn unique leadership skills from Robert and industry leaders. I will spend time at the E-Base as they increase their knowledge on climate change and renewable energy. To take this knowledge and experience back to Ventura County Students through an educational medium will be beneficial to the students themselves, teachers and the community at large.

Related documents:

- Recommendation letter from Robert Swan recommended me for the Expedition – (8)
- Brochure on the Antarctic Expedition – (9)
- www.2041.com