



SD CHILDREN & NATURE

## San Diego Naturalists

Notes for Meeting on Thursday, January 23, 2014, 1:00 to 2:45 pm at Tecolote Nature Center  
Coordinated by the San Diego Children and Nature Collaborative

**Introductions.** Attending were Phil Pryde and Brian Moehl, SD Audubon Society; Brittin Romero, Project Wildlife; Carol Wilson, SD Natural History Museum; Tina Rysedorph and Monica Bockman, Tecolote Nature Center; Wes Farmer, Torrey Pines; Mike Snyder, Claremont Mesa Education Foundation; and Judy Osman, Judie Lincer and Anne Fege, SD Children and Nature Collaborative.

### Updates

- There is interest in the California Naturalist Program, and next steps are to identify a sponsoring organization and funds for about 0.5 person working 0.5 year to organize the training.
- Two qualified instructors offered the Certified Interpretive Guide training classes in August 2012 (Crystal De Soto) and September 2013 (Tamara Bankson). Both are interested in offering classes in April 2014.
- The schedule for naturalist training programs was reviewed for Canyoneers, Museum Docents, and Mission Trails Regional Park volunteers, for 2013-2014
- Tecolote Nature Center is hosting several training sessions for new volunteers, and will use the "Birding for Naturalists" course.

### School Nature Consultants

There is great interest and local resources for exploring the development, training, and coordination of school nature consultants. Many teachers are aware that students are engaged by nature, but lack confidence and resources, and will welcome support for nature-based learning.

### Outcomes in five years

- Every school has someone to support the teachers in nature-based learning
- Teachers get training, encouragement, and recommended resources
- Teachers are using local nature resources, integrating them into all subjects, using nature in the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)
- Nature programs are networked and supported within school districts and school boards, meeting requirements and standards
- Parents and the community advocate for nature-based learning and outdoor experiences, which influences teachers and administrators
- Nature is part of everyday learning for children, in their schoolyard and occasional field trips

### Perspectives of teachers

- Some teachers are already very engaged and participatory but need support from administrators
- Teachers can share their lessons, activities, successes with other teachers
- Nature can be integrated into all curriculum areas

- Need suggestions on how to use nature to foster Common Core learning, such as journaling, drawing, math
- Need to evaluate effectiveness of nature-based learning, evidence that students are learning
- Hard for students to sit in classroom, sit on a bus to a field trip, need more active learning
- Teachers already have “too much” to do
- Teachers can suggest schoolyard nature projects for PTA funding and parent support

### **Potential roles of naturalists**

- Serve as trusted and respected nature mentors, sustained and reliable support to teachers
- Offer to mentor, model, co-teach, and otherwise provide support to teachers
- Offer assistance with native plants, nearby field trips, tips for outdoor learning, natural materials to use in lessons
- Help teachers set up schoolyard nature and nearby walk destinations, and help them prepare students for these outdoor experiences
- Raise confidence and comfort of teachers, “wait until you see how easy it is, how engaged the kids are”
- Filter resources and promote them to teachers, ensure alignment with NGSS and other standards
- Contribute to setting goals and objectives, and to an evaluation system
- Integrate field trips with schoolyard lessons, serve as a nature guide on field trips, compare-contrast schoolyard with nature/field trips
- Invite parent support and suggest opportunities for PTA funding
- Be flexible, these could be volunteer or funded part-time positions

### **Perspectives of nature education organizations**

- Stronger partnerships with schools and communities
- Enhanced grant opportunities by working together
- Extending services and experiences (and # student-hours) before and after field trips
- More visibility for nature center, children will bring their parents to field trip places
- Could be perceived as competition for naturalist-led programs at their nature sites/centers

### **What are the next steps?**

- Use the School Garden Consultations (Master Gardeners) program as a model, as it starts with qualified volunteers (trained Master Gardeners, similar to our trained naturalists) and offer training, coordination, and oversight for a school and its teachers
  - Promote qualifications of experienced naturalists plus training to work with/in schools
  - School districts need to consider this an official community support program
- Write a prospectus, and approach local businesses/funders to get some seed funding
- Invite teachers (w/ substitute pay) and nature educators to a planning day
- Perhaps offer the first training in late spring

### **Other suggestions**

- Use photos and stories to share nature experiences with other school classes and parents
- Outdoor learning and play provide “beneficial risk” experiences for children
- Reduce fear reactions by teaching “that’s interesting,” followed by either a step backward or a step forward!
- Address districts’ insurance requirements for sponsoring organizations

Send meeting note corrections to Anne Fege, [afege@aol.com](mailto:afege@aol.com)