



SAN DIEGO CHILDREN AND NATURE

2015 Accomplishments

San Diego Children and Nature (SDCaN) was organized in January 2009 by individuals and educational, environmental, business, and community groups with shared concerns that today's children have fewer and fewer opportunities to experience nature. San Diego Children and Nature leads the regional movement to connect all children to nature by providing professional learning, and networking for educators, families, and communities. Our vision is a world in which all children play, learn, and grow with nature in their everyday lives.

This document outlines accomplishments completed from January 1 to December 31, 2015 that were inspired, convened, and/or organized by SDCaN.

Goal 1. Increase public awareness of the value of nature and outdoor experiences

Website. The website (www.sdchildrenandnature.org) includes current information about programs and pages for educators, families, and design and health professionals.

Community Fairs. Loose Parts Nature Play activities were organized for unstructured play with children and parents at EarthFair in Balboa Park on Sunday, April 19. Children were invited to play and construct with bamboo poles, tree cookies, pine cones, twine, sheets, boxes, palm fronds, and other natural materials are provided to inspire forts and teepees and more!

Families. More than 1,500 families are part of Family Adventures in Nature (www.FamilyAdventuresinNature.org), helping families get nature back on their calendars with a variety of opportunities each month in the San Diego region. A weekly email is sent, listing the upcoming events and adventures. Join (free!) at www.meetup.com/familyadventuresinnature.

Goal 2. Enhance schools' ability to connect children to nearby nature

Education Program Committee. This new committee has met since September and has worked on criteria for nature-based learning, marketing strategies for teachers and districts, and structural revisions for the website. Three meetings of the San Diego Garden Educators' group were held.

Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Lesson series have been drafted for Grade 4 featuring watersheds and earth sciences, and for Middle School for global climate change, both including field trips, schoolyard activities, and pre- and post-field trip activities. Other lesson series are being prepared for Grade 3 featuring adaptations and Grade 5 for ecosystems, energy and matter. Eight workshops on nature-based learning in NGSS were held for nature educators, led by Associate Professor Meredith Vaughn, San Diego State University's Center for Research on Mathematics and Science Education and San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE):

- January 23, engaging students in argumentation
- February 28, energy and matter, related to Ecosystems
- March 13, structure and function, related to animal and plant adaptations
- April 17, inviting students to ask questions
- May 15, evaluation of lessons and field trips
- September 24, earth sciences and three-dimensional learning
- October 22, driving questions for field trips and schoolyard-based learning
- November 19, science practices to support ecosystems themes

Schoolyard Habitat Workshops. Four workshops were held: at San Diego Botanic Garden on May 30, the Water Conservation Garden on June 6, Loma Portal Elementary School on October 15, and one more school in early 2016. These were funded by San Diego Gas & Electric.



Outdoor Education Initiative. SDCaN is participating in the Clairemont Education Foundation's outdoor education initiative for the Clairemont and Madison Clusters in San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD). Participants include Friends of Tecolote Canyon, teachers and principals, and community members. SDUSD Board Member Kevin Beiser introduced and the board approved a proclamation to support children and nature.

Teachers Conference. More than 150 teachers attended the 16 nature-related presentations (three "nature strands") and several exhibits relating to nature-based learning, at the San Diego Science Educators' Association (SDSEA) conference on February 28. Sixty after-school providers learned more about using school gardens and nearby nature to expand children's outdoor play and learning, at the STEMpower Conference sponsored by SDCOE on March 14.

Goal 3. Partner with community groups to value, promote and provide opportunities for outdoor experiences.

Designing for Nature. Board president Ilisa Goldman was recognized by American Society of Landscape Architects in San Diego for her designs at Barrio Logan Child Care Center and Manzanita Gathering Place, and is leading the effort to transform Loma Portal School to an Ecological Schoolyard.

Children & Nature Network (C&NN). Board member Janice Swaisgood is the Director of Natural Families with C&NN and leads initiatives to cultivate families' connections to nature through exploration and play. Through her efforts, C&NN has extended the reach of Family Nature Clubs through grassroots efforts and large-scale partnerships with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Canadian Wildlife Federation, and others. The Green Schoolyards Initiative is gaining momentum nationally, and there is a new partnership with the National League of Cities for Promoting Connections to Nature.

Goal 4. Drive change in attitudes, skills and behaviors that lead to connections with nature.

The mission of SDCaN now incorporates "leading the regional movement" for children and nature.

Goal 5. Promote learning, sharing and networking

Communications. Contact lists maintained for local contacts and teachers/educators. Restructuring of website began, to better reach and inform classroom teachers, nature educators, and families.

Meetings. Two general meetings were held, both at the Girl Scout Program Center: May 6, focused on organizing watershed-level programs and field trips, and November 4, Nature Mingle.

Goal 6. Build sustainable organization to support mission

Governance. SDCaN filed for and was incorporated as a nonprofit in California. SDCaN applied and was sent a letter of exemption as a 501(c)(3) organization. Mission was revised; bylaws were adopted; and a Board of Directors established. San Diego Social Ventures Partners provided consultation on board governance and business approaches, and fiscal sponsorship was explored with Mission Edge. The San Diego Science Alliance (SDSA) served as SDCaN's fiscal agent through March.

Board meetings. Meetings were held on January 6, February 3, March 3, April 7 and 23, May 5, June 1 and 24, August 11, September 10 and 29, October 13 and 29, November 17, and December 3.

Funding. Proposals were submitted (but not funded) for Learning Outdoors: Nature Supports Science Standards to The San Diego Foundation, Greening Schoolyards and Greening Children's Everyday Lives to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire), and Nature-based Learning in Children's Everyday Lives, to The Parker Foundation. In-kind contributions for meetings held at Girl Scouts of San Diego-Imperial Council program center in Balboa Park, SD Botanic Garden, the Water Conservation Garden, and SD Audubon Society.

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