

Orange County Coastal Coalition

The Orange County Coastal Coalition, which I Chair, provides an opportunity to learn about and collaborate on current topics affecting not only our coastal cities, but those inland as well. As such, our September 27 meeting provided a forum to hear from Mr. Jonathan Witt, Director of Educational Programs at the Ocean Institute; and Dr. Meg Hiesinger, Educational Program Director at The Ecology Center.

Mr. Jonathan Witt, Director of Educational Programs, shared the Ocean Institute's hands-on marine science, and environmental education immersion style programs that more than 115,000 K-12 students and 8,000 teachers participate in annually.

Since 2004 the Watershed Education Program has become the Flagship program of the Ocean Institute's Environmental Curriculum. Students are introduced to watershed science through a field experience at the Ocean Institute, where they conduct experiments aboard the *RV Sea Explorer* and in our laboratories.

As a class, the students develop a testable question, plan an investigation based on that question, record data, draw conclusions, and compile a report of their investigation. The goal is to create an increase in concern and knowledge about watershed/water quality issues in Southern California.

Their efforts will culminate when the students present the findings of their research projects at the Ocean Institute's annual *Kids' Conferences on Watersheds*. This program immerses students in the science of watersheds while meeting 5th Grade California State, Common Core, and Next Generation Science Standards.

A total of 6 programs provide unique experiences for 4th through 12th grade students. The Ocean Institute's Watershed Education Programs provide both students and teachers with the opportunity to engage in scientific research. The Ocean Institute's staff guides them as they examine their local watershed.

For more information about the Ocean Institute's Watershed Educational Program visit <http://www.ocean-institute.org/teacher/departments.html>

Dr. Meg Hiesinger, Educational Program Director, shared about The Ecology Center's interactive exhibition, The Water Shed. The innovative mobile water exhibition is an interactive experience that teaches where our local water supply comes from and how the simple choices we make every day greatly affects the amount of water we use.

The Water Shed includes two learning stations, connecting us to both local and global water solutions and appeals to visitors of all ages to promote better water stewardship in Southern California. It also specifically supports 4th and 5th grade common core science standards.

This year, over 3,600 people have visited The Water Shed exhibition at off-site events, such as school visits, The Children's Water Festival, World Water Day, the Switchback Bro AM, and The Hurley Pro.

While visiting, they can harvest their own portion of water to use throughout the exhibit moving through stations of everyday choices that directly and indirectly affect water consumption. They're given choices between options of how they'd "spend"

their harvested water as they would during a typical day, and at the end, they see how much water they consume through direct use (turning on a faucet, hose, shower, toilet) vs. indirect use (water used in manufacturing, shipping, agriculture, etc.).

Visitors are also educated on global water issues and solutions, such as individual water transportation devices, human-powered irrigation, and water purification. And, the most important part of the exhibition is the final stage where visitors can pledge actions that will decrease water consumption and increase water awareness, conservation, and stewardship.

For more information about The Ecology Center's Water Shed mobile exhibition visit http://www.theecologycenter.org/programs/programs_article/the_water_shed/

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