



Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

# Education Programs

*Connecting the classroom to nature*







What better way to connect your students to nature than to take them into the outdoors! The MRCA offers many exciting programs for students of all ages. Our experienced Naturalists have worked with public, private, and charter schools. Our content is tied to California State Science Standards, the Environmental Education

### Residential Outdoor Education

Truly experience the natural world by immersing your students in a 3-5 day overnight program in the Santa Monica Mountains! During your stay in comfortable lodgings with wholesome meals, students learn about nature and its inhabitants, gain opportunities for personal growth, and cultivate friendships and experiences that will last a lifetime.

Our lessons focus on the unique Mediterranean ecosystem, dynamic local history, and threatened watersheds. Our programs predominantly serve 4th – 6th grades who have limited access and familiarity with nature. Some popular standard-based lessons include Plant & Animal Adaptations, Outdoor Skills, Fire Ecology, Native American Culture and History, Sensory Awareness Night Hikes, and Astronomy. Residential Outdoor Education will provide your students with a deeply meaningful outdoor experience.

*"It was a great experience for my students, many of whom had never hiked or been outdoors for an extended period of time before. I honestly believe that this experience made a hugely positive experience in my students' lives."*

Susan Dipasquo, Teacher  
Thomas Starr King Middle School

### Partnerships

Seeking a long term connection between your students, your school, and the Santa Monica Mountains? Partnerships can be forged between the MRCA and your school to provide classroom visits and naturalist-led field trips over the course of the academic year. Our talented naturalists craft lessons for each visit with a specific environmental education focus. Topics are introduced to students in their classroom then reinforced and expanded during a field trip to local parks.

Students build upon the lessons of the previous month, gaining a greater appreciation of their local parks and a connection to the ecosystem. Lessons in the past included Secrets of Shelters, Pollinators, and the Urban-Wildland Interface. The year concludes with a large community service project, such as a beach cleanup of our beautiful coastal areas.

*"Through our partnership with the MRCA, our children are not only learning state standards through writing, hands-on lessons, keen observation, and exploration. The students at Mariposa are excited about the environment. Under the caring guidance of MRCA naturalists, they receive gifts from Mother Nature that will prepare them for the great work ahead of them – being fully awake human beings."*

Jeff Lough, Principal  
Mariposa School for Global Education



Initiative (EEI), and California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights. We believe that all students benefit academically and emotionally from exploring the outdoors. The MRCA's network of urban parks, open-space preserves, and Los Angeles watershed areas can connect students with their "Big Backyard".

### Day Trips

One day spent in nature can spark a lifetime of interest in our public lands. We can join your school for one day outings, called Unique Adventures, in our beautiful system of parks. Programs can be tailored to your needs and curriculum to make the most of your day in the park. For example, English classes can hike through beautiful vistas to gain inspiration for a descriptive narrative. Entire grade levels can benefit from a day of teambuilding activities to foster leadership and personal growth.

Students from urban schools and community groups can explore the beauty of the Santa Monica Mountains, perhaps for the first time. Many students have reported never knowing that such open and undeveloped space could exist so close to the booming metropolis of greater Los Angeles. A visit to the local parks often results in students returning with their families to share what they have learned.

*"Viewing our world from an entirely different perspective is amazing. Having an experience like this with my classmates was a beautiful experience."*

Tawya, Student  
Garfield High School

### Free Trips to the Mountains

If you are a Title 1 elementary school or special needs group, you are eligible for a free field trip to the local mountains.

For almost 30 years, the William O. Douglas Outdoor Classroom (WODOC) in Franklin Canyon has introduced underserved youth to Los Angeles' natural resources, reaching 10,000 school children annually. Franklin Canyon has 605 acres of natural open space, including accessible trails, a 3-acre lake, duck pond, chaparral covered slopes, shady grassland meadows, and is home to the Sooky Goldman Nature Center.

At Franklin Canyon Park, students are immersed in the perfect outdoor experience with a 2-hour docent led nature discovery hike focusing on urban wildlife, Native American Tongva culture, and watersheds of the Santa Monica Mountains. Our educational program incorporates hands-on and experiential-based learning to build upon classroom lessons. Students will also have the opportunity to view wildlife first-hand, including hawks, ducks, lizards, rabbits, and butterflies.

WODOC programs are operated by Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority with funding from Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and National Park Service.



## About the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) was created in 1985 with a mission to protect and preserve park and open space lands surrounding Los Angeles and is a joint powers authority between the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Conejo Recreation and Park District and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. The MRCA continually strives to make these lands accessible to all residents of Southern California.

### Park Options for Education Programs



*Franklin Canyon in Beverly Hills, CA*



*King Gillette Ranch in Calabasas, CA*



*Temescal Gateway Park in Pacific Palisades, CA*



*Vista Hermosa Natural Park in Los Angeles, CA*



**To learn more about the MRCA, our parks, and our programs:**

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