

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION HIGHLIGHTS

Through a Conservancy Proposition 12 grant, the MRCA offers comprehensive educational interpretation programs at many Conservancy and MRCA parks. Educational programming and visitor services are offered at the Evan Frankel Discovery Center at the Augustus F. Hawkins Natural Park, the William O. Douglas Outdoor Classroom in Franklin Canyon, Temescal Gateway Park, the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens, and the Sonia Thompson Nature Center in Towsley Canyon. Some of the ongoing programs funded in part by the Conservancy are as follows:

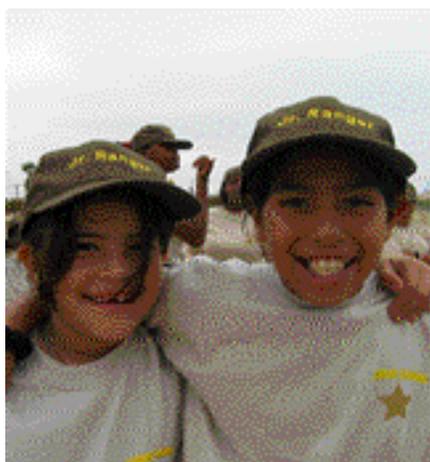
The Recreational Transit Program (RTP) provides free or low-cost bus transportation for people who otherwise would not have access to a mountain park or beach. Targeted populations often do not have a reliable transportation source, and public transportation routes bypass most of these natural areas. RTP provides the critical link to the natural outdoors for thousands of city dwellers every year. In 2001-2002 over 40,000 people visited the mountains on an RTP bus. This program is also funded by a grant from City and County of Los Angeles transportation funds.

Docent Programs throughout Conservancy parks are critical to meeting the agency's goal of providing visitor service and education programs to the public. Volunteers take part in a 10-week training before they lead educational and interpretive programs for both schools and the general public, staff facilities, and help with special events. Parks featuring volunteer-led programs include Santa Clarita Woodlands Park, Franklin Canyon Park, the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens, the Whittier-Puente Hills, the Augustus F. Hawkins Natural Park, and Ramirez Canyon Park.

Junior Ranger Programs feature multiple sessions covering outdoor skills and the natural and cultural resources of a specific park. Participating youth have an opportunity to work closely with rangers and naturalists who serve as mentors and educators, passing on to the Junior Ranger the skills, knowledge and motivation to become stewards of the park.

Interpretive Programs led by both park rangers and interpretive staff cover a variety of themes. From nature hikes to campfire programs, these programs are both educational and enjoyable for all ages.

The Lotte Melhorn Nature Wagon is a traveling "nature center on wheels." Donated by longtime volunteer Lotte Melhorn, the Nature Wagon can travel to parks and special events. It comes packed with interpretive materials and can quickly be set up as an outdoor classroom. Featured programs of the Nature Wagon are Geology Rocks!, Plant Adaptations/Plants of the Chaparral, Skulls, Skins and Tracks, Outdoor Skills, the Ranger Profession, and Our Flying Friends.



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Augustus F. Hawkins Natural Park

Active programming at the Augustus F. Hawkins Natural Park located in South Central Los Angeles is a big part of the park's success. All programs are free of charge and there is something for all age groups. With the exploration of the natural world as their central theme, programs include activities for families, trips to other parks, after school programs, music, art, and special events. This year, an increase in community volunteering enabled more off-site programs.

Saturday Bus Program—Rain or shine, every Saturday a bus leaves at 9 a.m. to take families from the community surrounding the park to explore a mountain, canyon, stream, beach or meadow. Accompanied by a staff naturalist, groups journey to parkland of the Santa Monica Mountains to hike, picnic, learn, relax, and have fun.

After School Classes—Monday through Thursday at 4:00 p.m. groups of children gather at the Evan Frankel Discovery Center to take part in classes on art, science, gardening, music, and other aspects of exploring the natural world.

Camping Programs—After taking classes on camping and leadership skills, young people from the park travel to the mountains for three days and two nights of hiking, outdoor skills, and plant and animal programs. From pitching tents to roasting marshmallows, camping programs immerse the youngsters into the outdoors in a way that is a completely new experience for them. This year, trips included such destinations as Leo Carrillo State Beach, Sage Ranch, Point Mugu State Park, and Malibu Creek State Park.



Family Beach Days—New this fiscal year is Family Beach Day, a program that brings hundreds of families to the beaches during the late spring and summer months to enjoy the sun and sand as a community. On the first trip, over 180 individuals representing 32 families joined staff at Westward Beach in Malibu for a day of picnicking and playing in the surf.

Campfire Programs—The first Thursday of every month is family campfire night. Park staff supply the songs and the marshmallows while the community provides the singing and the warm, family spirit!

Special Events—On Veteran's Day, after listening to local veterans from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam conflict, and the Gulf War tell their personal stories, park visitors sent postcards and letters to our soldiers overseas. On the Winter Solstice, there was a bonfire with songs and stories about the moon. In the Spring, a movie on Jane Goodall's work with the chimpanzees was followed by an educator from Goodall's "Roots and Shoots" program, who taught the audience how to communicate like chimpanzees as well as the important environmental lessons learned in Africa. These are examples of some of the special events held throughout the year.

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Los Angeles River Center and Gardens

The Los Angeles River Center and Gardens, formerly the Lawry's California Center, continues to develop as the focal point for the greening of the Los Angeles River and the revitalization of the communities surrounding it. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, National Park Service, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, North East Trees, and the Friends of the Los Angeles River maintain offices at the River Center. A vibrant synergy is created among the groups for the planning and implementation of projects in the Los Angeles River Watershed.

Focused community outreach events included the Dia de Los Muertos Family Festival and the Los Angeles River Annual Bike Ride. Friends of the Los Angeles River and the Los Angeles Bike Coalition host regular walks and bike rides originating from the River Center. In the next fiscal year, the River Center will serve as the center of a comprehensive community outreach and education program. Planning for this exciting program, which seeks to increase the interest of local children in the natural resources of the river and other Conservancy parks, was initiated this year.



Temescal Gateway Park

One of the Conservancy's busiest sites is the 160-acre Temescal Gateway Park in the Pacific Palisades. This beautiful tree lined canyon contains a year-round stream and hosts over 10,000 park visitors a year. The site contains cabins, a dining hall, classrooms, an amphitheater, and an auditorium as well as trails into Topanga State Park. The site is home to Earth Adventure Camp, the Temescal Field Science Program, overnight camps, and the Earth Adventure Day Camp. The Temescal Family Campfire Program is a popular feature on summer evenings.



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Franklin Canyon Park

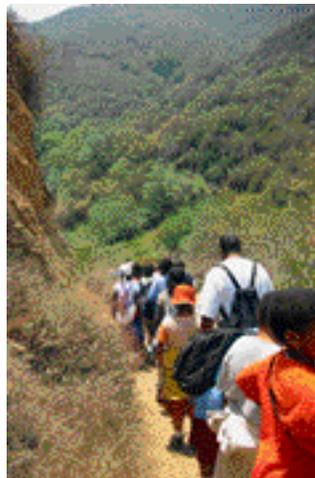
The facilities at Franklin Canyon Park and the William O. Douglas Outdoor Classroom (WODOC) include the Sooky Goldman Nature Center, the Sam Goldman Amphitheater, the Michael and Eugene Rosenfeld Auditorium, and the Ranch Area Amphitheater. These facilities are used throughout the year for public meetings as well as private engagements.

Currently Franklin Canyon Park and WODOC are managed through a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Park Service, WODOC, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority and operate on a line item expenditure from the National Park Service. In over twenty years of operation, WODOC has served over 1.8 million people from the greater Los Angeles area.

Santa Clarita Woodlands Park

Easily accessible from Interstate 5, the many beautiful canyons and trails of Santa Clarita Woodlands Park offer wilderness recreational opportunities within a ten minute drive from the urban center of the San Fernando Valley.

Ed Davis Park in Towsley Canyon provides visitor-serving park features in the central portion of Santa Clarita Woodlands Park. Services include a ranger station, shady picnic areas, restroom facilities, trails, the Sonia Thompson Nature Center, and a well-equipped lodge available for overnight use by groups. Campfire programs, ranger-led hikes, and school programs are provided throughout the year and increased greatly in 2001-2002. Pico Canyon, located in the northern portion of the park, has a rich oil history. Tucked at the base of the canyon's chaparral-dominated slopes is Mentryville, the historic oil town. Docent-led walks give school children and other visitors a chance to view the remaining one-room schoolhouse, barn, and Superintendent's House, which are being restored.



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Ramirez Canyon Park

This year Ramirez Canyon Park solidified both its Senior and Public Outreach Program and Children's Educational Program. A variety of site amenities were put in place to better serve the participants in these programs. An ADA-accessible creekside trail and picnic area allows park visitors to experience the native riparian habitat found in many coastal canyons without a strenuous hike. As such, individuals, who cannot or do not make use of more challenging trails in the Santa Monica Mountains, are now exposed to the beauty of these landscapes. A native plant garden was restored after installation of the park's state-of-the-art wastewater treatment system and is now served by ADA-accessible brick pathways. Additional pathways and seating areas make the property an ideal spot to host the Outreach and Educational Programs.

Educational Outreach Program for Children with Disabilities—The Children's Educational Program is a joint venture with the nonprofit Happy Trails organization. Its primary goal is to give children and young adults with disabilities a high-quality, interactive educational experience in a fun, safe environment. The program centers around various animal activities that emphasize the reinforcement of high self-esteem and improved communication and cooperation skills. The program also provides environmental instruction about the ecology of Ramirez Canyon Park and the Santa Monica Mountains.

Senior and Public Outreach Program—The Senior and Public Outreach Program continues to give park visitors with limited access to traditional park programs a wonderful retreat that exposes them to the best of Malibu and the Santa Monica Mountains. In the past year, Ramirez Canyon Park has hosted numerous senior homes, the Reverends from the Los Angeles Mission on Skid Row, at-risk youths from Compton, various battered women's shelters, and young women from the Esperanza Housing Project in Los Angeles.

