

# **Report on Five Community Meetings Conducted by the Environment Discovery Team San Diego Women's Foundation February and March, 2009**

**Summary Report, May 10, 2009**

## **SUMMARY**

The Environment Discovery Team of the San Diego Women's Foundation (SDWF) Grants Committee completed five community meetings to assist the SDWF in identifying a meaningful focus for environmental grants awarded in 2010. These meetings gathered citizens together to listen to their priorities for environmental action in San Diego. Community meetings were hosted in February and March 2009 by the Birch Aquarium and the University of California at San Diego; Chula Vista Nature Center and Southwestern College; Heritage of the Americas Museum and Cuyamaca College; Palomar College; and San Diego State University and the College Neighborhoods Foundation.

At each community meeting, a facilitator led the Appreciative Inquiry process with discussion questions, while a scribe captured the ideas and insights and later wrote a summary of the meeting. The Appreciative Inquiry group process was used to seek out the best of "what is" to help ignite the collective imagination of "what might be."

The 83 participants offered a diversity of personal experiences in nature, and their stories included local places, outdoor recreation activities, animals, and positive feelings. In identifying ways to enhance nature experiences, they suggested creating more gardens, urban parks, and nearby natural areas, and greater education and advocacy about the environment. Participants in each community meeting identified three priorities for local environmental needs, and collectively these included education, community engagement, getting nature values to a 'critical mass,' food and water, open space, habitat preservation, conservation, and scientific research. For the priority areas identified within a community meeting, participants identified action steps that could be undertaken to enhance those local environmental values.

Further information about the SDWF is available at [www.sdwomensfoundation.org](http://www.sdwomensfoundation.org); about the Environment Discovery Team and these community meetings from Leigh Hartman, Chair, [leighr@san.rr.com](mailto:leighr@san.rr.com); and about this report from Anne S. Fege, Ph.D., [afege@sdnhm.org](mailto:afege@sdnhm.org).

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## INTRODUCTION

The Environment Discovery Team (Team) is an advance planning team of the San Diego Women’s Foundation (SDWF) Grants Committee, chartered to learn more about the environmental issues, threats, opportunities, and priorities in San Diego. The team’s goal is to understand local environmental realities in order to identify a meaningful focus for grants awarded in 2010 in the environmental field. Team members completed five community meetings with leaders and ordinary citizens to listen to their priorities for environmental in San Diego.

Started in 2000, the SDWF has already granted \$1.5 million in the San Diego region and has built an endowment of \$1.3 million. The SDWF rotates grant-making through six broad areas, and in 2009-2010 will be granting about \$200,000 to support local environmental programs. Once the focus is defined and the grant guidelines written, local non-profit organizations will be invited to submit proposals in autumn, 2009. The SDWF Grants Committee will review the proposals, conduct site visits for highest-ranked proposals, and identify final candidates. The entire SDWF membership chooses which projects to fund from this final list. These projects are then awarded in

June 2010 and tracked throughout the grant duration, and the funded organizations are designated as “community partners” to maintain relationships with the SDWF.

The SDWF is using the following definition as a starting point for the environment grants focus: "Environmental Action: Actions that promote the awareness, appreciation, health, and sustainable use of San Diego County's natural resources - including air, water, land, climate, topography, biology, and ecology - for the benefit of all."

## **METHODS**

An important aspect of the SDWF’s discovery process is convening meetings in diverse (geographic and/or socioeconomic) neighborhoods in the San Diego region. The purpose of these meetings is to gather leaders and ordinary citizens together in order to listen to their priorities for the specific grant topic for the following year.

Five meetings were scheduled and organized by two or three Team members. They were co-hosted by the following community groups and local universities/colleges, and the reports of these meetings are included as Appendices A through E:

- March 9, Birch Aquarium and the University of California at San Diego (Appendix A)
- February 17, Chula Vista Nature Center and Southwestern College (Appendix B)
- March 26, Heritage of the Americas Museum and Cuyamaca College (Appendix C)
- February 25, Palomar College, (Appendix D)
- March 24, San Diego State University and College Neighborhoods Foundation (Appendix E)

Team members secured a meeting location and time; developed invitation lists; and invited local leaders, students and other citizens. The invitations were sent by email, and emphasized the value of getting input from different communities to listen, learn, get a sense of San Diegans’ visions for their communities, and hear their priorities in the area of the environment.

The meetings were attended by 83 community members. Participants provided their contact information, and answered a short demographic survey. They were reminded that they will not receive any favoritism for their participation but will be included on the list to receive the grant guidelines in fall 2009. Light refreshments were served. At each community meeting, a facilitator led the Appreciative Inquiry process with discussion questions, while a scribe captured the participant’s thoughts, ideas, opinions, hopes, and dreams on newsprint. Team members served as facilitators and scribes.

Appreciative Inquiry is a group process that seeks out the best of “what is” to help ignite the collective imagination of “what might be.” In a group setting, it changes the dynamics of the conversation. It helps people to examine/discuss possibilities" instead of problems and to focus on "priorities" (which is about what we would MOST LIKE to have) instead of needs (which is about what we DON'T have). Questions are designed to discover people’s unique strengths and qualities, to hear their vision of the good and the possible, and to invite positive change. More information is available on the website, <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/> .

Four questions were asked, and the answers are combined and summarized in the next section. A summary of each meeting was written, and is included as Appendices A to E.

- Question 1: Nature experiences and feelings
- Question 2: Enhancing nature experiences
- Question 3: Priorities for local environmental actions
- Question 4: Action steps to enhance local environmental values

On April 9, the Team reviewed the community meeting summaries and identified common threads, themes, and connections to help narrow the grant focus. They discussed such local needs as true internal engagement of the previously unengaged; calls to action beyond just information; and hands-on activities that engage communities and not just individuals. Appendix F provides a summary of that meeting.

### Demographic information about participants

Demographic information was requested, in a half-page survey, and was completed by 60 of the participants (at the Birch Aquarium, Chula Vista, Cuyamaca, and Palomar meetings).

- Gender: 67% were female, 33% male
- Ages: 18% were 26-25 years old; 22% were 26 to 40 years old; 23% were 41 to 55 years old; and 37% were 56 or older.
- Ethnicity: Of the attendees, 83% were Caucasian, 12% were Hispanic, 2 were Asian (3%), 1 was Native American (2%) and none was African-American.
- Education: Of the attendees, 37% had a Masters' degree or higher; 34% had a four-year college degree or higher; 25% had some college education; and 3% had high school or some high school education.
- Income: Household income of attendees was distributed as 18% with under \$20,000/year; 14% with \$20,000 to \$50,000/year; 39% with \$50,000 to \$100,000/year; and 25% over \$100,000/year.

### Nature (outdoor) interests of participants

In the participant survey, community meeting attendees indicated that they enjoy a range of nature (outdoor) activities. Table 1 summarizes these activities, and Table 2 identifies factors that limit their participation in these activities.

<b>Table 1. What nature (outdoor) activities do you enjoy most? (check one or more)</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Hiking or walking	68
Bird watching or wildlife viewing	48
Gardening	43
Surfing, swimming, fishing, other activities at the ocean	35
Camping	33
Bicycle riding	30
Boating, sailing, kayaking	22
Winter sports	8

<b>Table 2. What limits your nature (outdoor) activities?</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Time	58
Distance from home	30
Other	12
Health	10*

\*Percentages exceed 100, as some checked more than one.

## **RESULTS**

By following the Appreciate Inquiry process, the 83 participants described positive nature experiences; discussed ways that more nature experiences could be available locally; identified priorities; and listed action steps to enhance local environmental values.

### **Question 1: Nature experiences and feelings**

Participants were asked to provide insights, in response to these questions, for about 20 minutes:

“So to begin, we’d like each of you to think about a time here in the San Diego region when you were outdoors in nature (...at a park, the beach, a trail, in your backyard, watching a sunset, etc) and it felt especially good. You felt energized, or inspired, or connected to the natural world around you. What was memorable about it? Tell your story. And then tell us, why did you pick THAT story? What was special about that time?”

As these responses were assembled and reviewed, the diversity of personal experiences in nature was striking. Most place names were local, and none were repeated. Many outdoor recreation activities were mentioned. Most feelings were positive, with very few negative feelings or thoughts. And animals were featured in many stories!

The stories were very inspiring, and mentioned the following specific places, activities, feelings or thoughts, and animals.

#### **Places mentioned**

Chollas Lake	Montezuma Hill	Santee
Chula Vista Nature Ctr.	North Park	Silverwood Sanctuary
Cowles Mountain	Oregon	Sweetwater Reservoir
LaJolla	Carlsbad	Tecate Peak
Cuyamaca	Rancho la Puerta	Tecolote Canyon
Del Dios	San Diego Bay	Torrey Pines
Del Mar	San Dieguito Lagoon	Volcan Mountain
Estuary	Gardens (3)	Community park
Rural areas	Burned areas	Neighborhood
Pristine environment	Outdoor patio	

### **Activities mentioned**

Bicycling	Photographing	Walking dog
Bouldering	Sailing	Walking/hiking
Fishing	Surfing	With child (4)
Kayaking	Swimming	
Alone	Sun	Dark
Rain	Cool air	Quiet

### **Feelings and thoughts mentioned**

Amazed	Introspective	Renewed spirit
Calm, peaceful, relaxed (3)	Joyful	Self sufficient (3)
Concerned	Memories	Simplicity
Connected to nature (4)	Noticing things differently	Slowed down
Desire to preserve	Optimistic	Unstructured
Grateful	Proud	Wonder
Inspired	Refreshed, renewed (2)	

### **Animals mentioned**

Baby animals	Dolphins	Rattlesnake
Injured animals	Hérons	Sea turtle
Bald eagle	Hummingbird	Seagulls
Birds	Lizard	Sharks
Cat	Owl (2)	Snake
Coyotes (2)	Peregrine falcons	Whales
Deer osprey	Rabbit	Woodpecker

### **Question 2: Enhancing nature experiences**

Participants were asked to provide insights, in response to these questions, for about 20 minutes:

“Now we’re going to think a little more about those times. When you think about that time, what about this experience caused you to think differently, feel differently, or act differently, especially in relation to nature? When you think about that time, if you could have MORE of the essence of this experience, what would it be like?”

Participants focused on providing greater connections to nature in their daily lives. They suggested creating more gardens, urban parks, and nearby natural areas. They suggested restoration projects, more walkable and bicycle-friendly communities, and greater education and advocacy about the environment. Their answers included the following “quotes” from the meeting summaries:

Learn to live within the natural environment. Nature inspires and renews us.

Easy to ignore what we are not connected to. When connected, we can’t ignore it. Bring nature to a person to create a connection.

Connection with nature. What would have to change? All generations sense that some things will not happen in our lifetime. But it IS happening.

Connect nature to inner self. Circle of health that includes nature, physical, mental.

What is nature? What are different perceptions? Our environment was developed with people, humans were part of nature. Europeans created areas with no human contact (wilderness).

Humans planted pines, made weirs, grazed the land.

Every day is a memorable event in nature. How can we shift, to awareness that nature is part of us? A changed relationship with the surrounding world; noticing different things when you slow down; a sense of adventure; simplicity; one-ness with the world

Simplicity, slow down, reduce visual clutter

Localization of food and water, eliminating plastic water bottles, creating home and community gardens, eating locally and seasonally

Bring more environment into where we live, urban areas, homes. More parklands that are natural, not developed. Create landscapes at home to attract wildlife. Golf courses more nature-friendly.

Children are the future. We have to get “buy in” so that children can become familiar with the natural world. But don’t give up on our generation’s actions.

Develop a “critical mass.” No longer weird if you enjoy nature, outcast if you don’t do it. Have to tip the balance, maybe the time is right. Needs media, social marketing, public education.

“You only save what you love, only love what you know, only know what we learn.”

Education: people think it won’t happen to us. Yes it does. Evolution: thinking beyond our lifetimes.

Need more grassroots advocacy for the environment, to preserve it.

More open spaces. Urban parks/green spaces within cities as well as large parcels of open space in outlying areas.

“Get” the land now, before it is developed. It takes money, many owners want to sell to maintain the nature there.

Restore and clean up. Clear out and prevent invasive species.

What was formerly viewed as “beautiful” no longer is. For example, city lights, golf courses, waste, human gluttony. Destruction of habitat.

More control over development. Quit building a mall and Starbucks on every corner.

Develop alternatives for chemicals and materials that contaminate water and land.

Transportation in ways that require fewer cars. Many don’t own a car and must use public transit.

Reduce air pollution.

Walkability, bike paths, interconnected public space

### **Question 3: Priorities for local environment needs**

The facilitators invited the participants to identify their priorities, for the principal topics identified in the previous question.

“Now, we have many different kinds of ideas, results, thoughts up here.” Summarize briefly and work with the group to combine similar items/themes into ‘affinity groups.’ This should help focus the ideas a bit more. Indicate the three you consider most important, by placing each of your three ‘dots’ next to the items that are most important to you.

The priority areas were further discussed in Question 4, and these priority areas are identified in the following section. Their “vote” tabulations are included in the community meeting summaries, Appendices A through E.

### **Question 4: Action steps to enhance local environment values**

Participants were asked to suggest ways to address the environmental needs and enhance local environmental values, taking about 10 minutes for each priority area. The following instructions were given, in this “Wands and Miracles” discussion:

“Now, we’re looking at just these three areas, and these may be very different than what YOU started with from your story. So now we’d like to look again, together, at JUST these three areas, and think more about them.” Start with the area that received the most dots.

“If you could wave a Magic Wand and have even more of (this priority) here in the San Diego region, what would it look like? (The Magic Wand metaphor is to help remove any resource constraints, such as inadequate money, people, time, etc. The answers may be both outcomes/results or programs.)

“What if you could have a genuine MIRACLE in your community or elsewhere in the San Diego region, related to (this priority), what would that be?”

During these discussions, the following action steps were identified as outcomes and programs that could enhance local environmental values, for the eleven priority areas identified.

## **Education**

Education was identified as a priority at three community meetings, and the suggestions are grouped below for schools, audiences, subjects, approaches, and other.

### **Schools:**

- Field trips for every student in every school (3)
- Green living, eco-health, green curriculum K – 12 (3)
- Bring nature into the classrooms; outreach (2)
- Bring science into the schools
- Every school to be connected to nature and have a community garden
- Include environment in career tech education
- Teacher education (pre and follow-up materials), local ecology (2)
- Small classes so teachers can give more hands on experiences and really teach about nature
- Put science into graduation requirements and into the exit exams
- Introduce students to science early in life
- Get children out of classroom and into nature
- Partner with college students to inspire mentors

### **Audiences:**

- Homeowners
- Talk to legislators, elected officials, and policymakers to influence policy (3)
- Municipalities
- Gatekeepers (teachers, childcare, scout leaders...)
- Family involvement and opportunities
- Start young and continue for a lifetime

### **Subjects:**

- Creating green demonstration projects
- Water-awareness
- Experiencing food/water sources firsthand
- Grey water and rain capture demonstrations
- Take-home tips and info; teach what individuals can do (2)

- Recycling opportunities
- Unstructured time in nature
- Transportation
- Learn about local resources: water, natural habitats

Approaches:

- Touch-feel-smell Need hands-on experiences
- Setting examples through behavior (Reusable water bottles)
- Interactive, hands-on experiences (2)
- Opportunities for children to live in nature, go camping
- Make community service required of all students
- Environmental values integrated into the culture/inherent awareness
- Change the image of the value of working in the environment
- Improving incentives for working as a scientist
- Documentaries, media, web-based, marketing
- Study human's place in nature, primitive cultures
- How native Americans relied on natural world for survival
- Teach from the historical approach – what it was like before we got here
- Visit a different culture/country/economic level to see other people's values
- Collaboration (2)
- Create personal connections through the above experiences

Other:

- Integration and collaboration among groups
- Required community service
- Sense of place/awareness
- Business partnerships
- Huge hands-on nature learning center; Nature Center fully endowed (2)
- Funding for all children; especially at-risk populations

**Community engagement**

- Mandatory environmental community service
- “Green” block parties and cooking classes
- Create a community compost heap, recycling center
- Community gardens/farmers markets
- Share-a-car/share-a-bike programs
- Create local neighborhood transportation hubs, arrange for shuttles to canyons

**Personal responsibility**

- Incentives to recycle everything
- Changing the social norm about conservation, recycling
- Making green groups “cool”
- Environment is a theme for the arts: movies, TV, photos, video, song, art
- Benchmarks and annual reporting: “State of the Environment”

### **Getting nature values to a “critical mass”**

Ask the kids! (about news media)

Strategic media plan, messages, audiences. What is the objective, for this critical mass?

Need events, controversy, examples, something for news media to cover

One message is that consuming more does not give greater happiness. We are responsible for our taking care of or getting rid of possessions, before buying new ones. Why do we continue with planned obsolescence? We need to take care of what we have.

One missing message is how/why nature is important to humans. Why should children be learning about nature? Why gardens? Human civilization is dependent on healthy environments. All species, especially pollinators, importance of trees in civilization.

### **Bring more nature into places we live**

Organize community gardens, teach people about community organizing

Trade fruits and vegetables with neighbors and coworkers, an “informal farmers’ market”

More neighborhood parks with natural environments, creeks, picnic areas

Start within cities, turn abandoned lots into gardens and parks

Create backyard and front yard habitats, with flowers, native shrubs, vegetables, fruits, attracting birds and butterflies

### **Food and water**

Eliminate bottled water, control consumption

Equivalent of a "victory garden" in every home

Water recycling (indirect potable reuse), native landscaping-low water use, water harvesting, roof-top gardening

Eat local seasonal food, support local agriculture

Label food in markets with country of origin

### **Open space**

“Hands-on” open space (not just to look at), joint use of park/school space

A changed understanding of personal/private property

Interconnected public space, urban parks/community gardens

Eliminate urban sprawl, apply smart growth

Solar panels on every roof, rooftop gardens

Turn every asphalt area into green space, take down powerlines, make underground streets and parking

### **Habitat preservation**

Control invasive species, reduce effects of wildfires

Replace aging infrastructure and reduce non-source pollution

Quantify the ecological services that are provided by the various natural habitats

Purchase underdeveloped land/restore it

Protect viewshed of natural areas

### **Conservation**

Turn public officials into environmental advocates

Green building, renewable energy, water conservation

Building moratorium, curtail urban sprawl

Link all of the isolated habitats so that animals can migrate

Incentives to make businesses more environmentally responsible

More creative use of space to make green areas: rooftop gardens, parks on top of freeways

**Get the land now!** (land acquisition)

Get land donations, using tax shelters, planned giving, conservation easements

Get foreclosure properties now, get some donated by banks

Support land trusts, leverage purchases, find someone to identify the leverage opportunities

Identify "history" values of land

Green tax shift, tax polluters more, lower tax for natural areas

**Scientific research**

Fund everyone!

Affordable and sustainable energy, water conservation methods

How chemicals harm the environment; toxicity of products we use and how we are affected health-wise

Human impact on the large scale; monitoring changes over time

When creating new products plan how they will be safely destroyed later

Pay students to work in labs and hold internships in both high school and college

## **APPENDIX A: Birch Aquarium and University of California at San Diego**

March 9, 2009

Facilitators/Scribes: Lenore Ringler

Leigh Hartman

Logistics: Pamela Boynton

The 16 attendees included representatives from the San Diego Natural History Museum, Scripps Institute of Oceanography, Birch Aquarium, Bird Rock Community Council, La Jolla Shores Assoc., La Jolla Town Council Foundation, Torrey Pines Assoc., California Sea Grant of UCSD, Energy Policy Initiatives Center of USD, Friends of the Shores Map, Surf Angels and UCSD students.

Wonderful outdoor memories: The responses ranged from surfing with dolphins and leopard sharks to springtime wildflowers, peregrine falcons, coyotes and skunks. These experiences caused them to feel: Grateful, connected, concerned, inspired, amazed and an overwhelming desire to “conserve and preserve”.

Ideas included: more clean air and oceans, get kids connected to nature, more walkable communities, protect natural habitats, better public transportation, more effective public policy, enhance critical thinking, understand watershed impacts, localization of food and water, eliminating plastic water bottles, creating home and community gardens, eating locally and seasonally, recycling water for potable reuse, controlling invasive plant species, purchasing undeveloped land for restoration, increasing wilderness areas, bringing environmental curriculum into schools.

Most important: Participants identified these three areas as most important: Education, Food and water, and Habitat preservation.

### **Education:**

Get children out of classroom and into nature

Bring science into the schools

Partner with college students to inspire mentors

Integration and collaboration among groups

Required community service

Talk to legislatures to influence policy

California curriculum from K-12

Change the image of the value of working in the environment

Improving incentives for working as a scientist

Sense of place/awareness

Every school to be connected to nature and have a community garden

Include environment in career technical education

Visit a different culture/country/economic level to see other people's values (how does your neighbor live?)

### **Habitat preservation:**

Control invasive species

Sewage, aging infrastructure and non-source pollution

Identify priorities for conserving, restoring and building

Quantify the ecological, services that are provided by the various natural habitats

Purchase underdeveloped land/restore it  
Protect viewshed of natural areas  
Increase wilderness areas, problem of wildfires

**Food and water:**

Eliminate bottled water  
Consumption control  
Equivalent of a "victory garden" in every home  
Construction control  
Water recycling (indirect potable reuse)  
Native landscaping-low water use  
Water harvesting  
Roof-top gardening  
Eat local seasonal food  
Support local agriculture  
More community discussion for outreach  
Solar powered trash containers  
Label food in markets with country of origin  
Quality of food and water

**APPENDIX B: Chula Vista Nature Center and Southwestern College**

February 17, 2009

Facilitators: Leigh Hartman  
Lynn Owens  
Scribe: Catherine Blair  
Supplemental Notes: Erica Ueland

**Think about a time, here in the San Diego region, when you were outdoors in nature and it felt especially good; you felt energized, or inspired, or connected to the natural world around you. What was memorable about it?**

Estuary—take kayak out; wind, birds, rain, alone, helping, high tide and could go places you usually can't  
Sunny, warm day in North Park but here at the nature center it was a rainy, wild day  
December 6, seeing first sea turtle; sense of awe; changed her life, changed perspective of nature  
Walk around Nature Center alone, share with daughter  
Fishing; saw two deer and one fawn  
Arizona—hot, dry: change in coming to San Diego. Air so much cooler here, breathe easier.  
Dramatic change  
Oregon: everything is green, next to coast, moss on trees, beauty, multi-sensory  
Four great blue herons flew by while walking unexpected; beauty, awesome, peaceful  
Osprey carrying a fish as it flew over her; favorite animal for her

Hiking in 2003 burned area; seeing new generation in nature and being with new generation (son)  
Hike in Carlsbad with toddler, smells, sharing with others, respectful of what they were seeing; close to urban and close to nature  
Fishing: flock of seagulls mobbed a vulture—bird did not attack him, bird was relaxed around humans  
Injured birds here—volunteer with them. After all are fed, sun is setting, birds look at her with satisfied eyes. Bald eagle vocalizes as birds are settling down for the night.  
Bike riding: took photos—bugs, rabbits, etc. saw plants and critters she used to take for granted. Newfound appreciation.  
Surfing in La Jolla: happy just sitting on boards in water; taking time out from rush  
Estuary—a moment in nature changed her life  
Owls watching their babies; babies picked up tennis balls and oranges and hopped around.  
Awesome!

**Supplemental notes to above responses:**

Solitude, peace, proximity to water, stayed at a place that “grabbed” me  
Sea turtle discovery, sense of awe. Complexity of the Bay.  
Beach cleanup, specialness, sense of responsibility  
The air in San Diego—difference and contrast with other places  
Osprey carrying fish—to see a favorite bird  
Seeing new generation of wildlife with my sons  
Comradery in sharing nature  
After feeding birds, they look at her with satisfied eyes, grateful. They are injured. It’s a connection.  
Taking photos—of bugs, plants, rabbits. Using essence of nature in her graphic design work.  
A new appreciation.  
A moment in nature changed her life. She became committed to protecting all this.

**What would it take, to experience more of this for yourself and others?**

Things are no longer beautiful when we realize they pollute:  
pollution  
waste  
human gluttony  
global warming  
conservation  
habitat destruction  
Conservation of green turtles  
Education  
Collaboration with fishermen  
Disconnect with nature  
Disconnect of nature and food. Connection of trash in creatures habitats. Recycle trash.  
Education: won’t happen to us. Yes it does. Evolution: thinking beyond our lifetimes.  
Creatures adapt foreign matter to their needs, shelter  
We need to live with the animals. Educate all generations.  
Learn to live within the natural environment. Nature inspires and renews us. Future effects.  
Easy to ignore what we are not connected to. When connected, we can’t ignore it. Bring nature to a person to create a connection.

Artificial environments—do we take responsibility. Research.  
Getting people into nature. When they come here, they get hooked. Teach the teachers.  
Environmental education.  
Save the wetlands. As endangered as some species. Education.  
History of our environment. Change will come but it must be done in an environmentally sensitive way.  
Re-create environment.  
Grass roots advocacy for the environment.

**Supplemental notes to above responses:**

What was formerly viewed as “beautiful” no longer is. For example, city lights, golf courses, waste, human gluttony. Destruction of habitat.  
Pro-Peninsula—Education to not destroy wildlife (e.g., turtles). Conservation.  
Some people do not have a connection with nature.  
Connection with nature. What would have to change? All generations sense that some things will not happen in our lifetime. But it IS happening.  
Animals are aware when we are helping them.  
Fire—we need to know how to live in nature.  
It’s easy to ignore when you are not connected to nature. When you are connected, you can’t ignore it. Helping kids to make connections.  
A vacuum cleaner hose became home for wildlife in the marsh.  
Future research and conservation of wildlife and species.  
Teachers need education in environmental issues.  
Wetlands need to be protected. Ecosystem is endangered.  
Educate young people to protect the land—open lands.  
There are fewer herons (great blue); egrets.  
Need more grassroots advocacy for the environment.

**Common Themes**

People connected to nature  
Environmental education  
Learning to live within nature  
Conservation  
Advocacy and public policy  
Spiritual connection  
Family-generational  
Responsibility, stewardship  
Empowerment  
Interdependence of people and nature  
Tools and incentives for individual action

**Priorities for further action**

Spiritual connection	(10 votes)
Education	(23 votes)
Conservation	(12 votes)
Advocacy and public policy	(10 votes)
Personal responsibility	(14 votes)

## **Education**

- Hands-on experience
- Access to nature
- Field trips
- Funding for all children; especially vulnerable
- Teacher education (pre- and follow-up materials)
- ALL citizens (not just children)
- Elected officials
- Family involvement and opportunities
- Take-home tips and info
- Recycling opportunities
- Business partnerships
- Municipalities educated
- Gatekeepers (teachers, childcare, scout leaders...)
- Transportation
- Documentaries, media, web-based
- Incentives for collaboration
- Unstructured time in nature
- More open space
- Huge hands-on nature learning center; classroom instruction
- Society values being outdoors
- Nature Center fully endowed
- Opportunities for children to live in nature, camping...
- Responsible childbearing
- Bring nature into the classrooms; outreach
- Marketing

## **Personal Responsibility**

- Less waste
- Clean freeways
- Hire homeless to clean up freeways
- More use of native plants
- Educate yourself
- Education followed up with personal action
- Water conservation
- Incentives to recycle everything
- Write public officials
- Changing the social norm re: conservation, recycling. "Community-based social marketing"
- Join community environmental groups
- Making green groups "cool"
- Encourage more volunteering
- Contests for posters, videos, stories
- Environment is a theme for the arts: movies, TV, photos, video, song, art
- 100% participation of the whole world
- Benchmarks and annual reporting: "State of the Environment"
- Renewable, green building

## **Conservation**

Public officials are environmental advocates

Personal conservation

Green building

Renewable energy

Water conservation

Building moratorium

Curtail urban sprawl

Link all of the isolated habitats so that animals can migrate

Incentives to make businesses more environmentally responsible

More creative use of space to make green areas: rooftop gardens, parks on top of freeways

Reforestation

Community College students work with scientists in paid internships, leading to jobs in the area

Habitat restoration. Accessible.

Conservation education for children—on-going.

## **APPENDIX C: Cuyamaca College and Heritage of the Americas Museum**

### **March 26, 2009**

Facilitators: Muriel McElhinney and Anne Fege

18 attended, meeting held from 4:30 to 6:45 pm

**Activity 1: Think about a time, here in the San Diego region, when you were outdoors in nature and it felt especially good; you felt energized, or inspired, or connected to the natural world around you. What was memorable about it?**

Live on horse ranch, now a farmer, no TV, children play in clean air. Food from garden, such a good feeling, we can provide for the family.

Close encounters with hummingbird on salvia, another took bath in water. Special moments, being close to wildlife

Cat experiencing wildlife outside, backyard with lizards, wonder of the cat discovering a new creature and backyard smells. Noticed because my cat noticed.

After wildfires, black in every direction; in the spring, green in every direction. So happy it didn't take years to recover. Purple lupine, Calif. poppies, beauty out of destruction.

At Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary, seven species of wildflowers were recorded for the first time, seeds dormant 50 years. Resilience of habitats, animals. Hike the day after the fire, still smoldering ashes, woodpecker in a tree. "Go for it" "Renewed hope," a sign that nature bounces back.

At St. Madeline's Sophie Center (day programs for disabled adults), there is a 2-acre organic garden. Students/adults find joy in natural atmosphere, growing plants, replanting them, so proud. With nature, it's right there. Brings joy, meaning, independence, a little revenue from selling the vegetables.

Rattlesnake experience. Different to get used to rattlesnakes on the doorstep at new home, seven years ago. Killed several, then realized they were here first. Bought snake stick

and snake boots, taught dogs to wait. One day saw rattlesnake on porch, stretched out in the sun. After 15 minutes on the porch, easily picked it up and moved it out in the yard. Faced fear, wrangled other snakes and moved them. We live in the same environment with wildlife, now feel more “at home” with snakes.

Grew up on ranch in the central valley. Cuyamaca College area more urban now but still many owls, coyotes, native plants.

Hiking path near Sweetwater Reservoir, a few yards away from the house. Walk early mornings on the weekend, walk to renew the spirit.

In Del Mar, saw a California king snake. “You can’t be here, someone will kill you.” Put the snake in the bushes and away from the trail.

Location is everything. Oak trees to sit under. At Rancho La Puerta, the site would be nothing without the natural environment. Oak grove off to the side, can be all alone, totally quiet. Dominant mountain there is a sacred peak.

On a hike on Volcan Mountain, wilderness all around, couldn’t see any development.

## **Activity 2: What would it take, to experience more of this for yourself and others?**

Often locals don’t appreciate the beauty in the backcountry. Want people to know and preserve it. Now potential Sunrise Powerlink route through El Monte Valley.

Connect nature to inner self. Circle of health that includes nature, physical, mental.

More students want to be in the garden (at St. Madeline’s), home activities and places more restricted.

“Get” the land now, before it is developed. It takes money, many owners want to sell to maintain the nature there.

Transportation in ways that require fewer cars. Many don’t own a car and must use public transit. Also need to reduce air pollution.

Get more people out in nature and rural places.

Events in every town to learn more about nature. Huge turnouts for Water Conservation Garden, SanTree events.

Schools will/do not bus kids to natural places. Can’t persuade schools to bring children, even if we have trails, nature programs. Objections are class requirements, time, money for buses, gas prices. Tie programs to state standards and find \$ for buses.

Get families out, “family days.” Richard Louv’s book reminds us that children have become scared of nature

Partners with other organizations such as KPBS, Children’s Initiative (Sandy Mcbreyer, found that highest risk was after school, benefits of after-school activities, started school for homeless that became Monarch School)

Children are the future. We have to get “buy in” so that children can become familiar with the natural world. “You only save what you love, only love what you know, only know what we learn.”

Not sufficient to take children to nature, there is more to sustainability

Teach and lead by example. Is this enough? Parents and adults bring children to nature, to become familiar with it.

Younger people using so much technology. Living closer to nature is hard work. Many do think of the environment, but it isn’t their top priority. Lead by example, green solutions, more accessible.

Develop a “critical mass,” no longer weird if you enjoy nature, outcast if you don’t do it.

Have to tip the balance, maybe the time is right. Needs media, social marketing, public education.

Bring more environment into where we live, urban areas, homes. More parklands natural, not developed. Create landscapes at home, to attract wildlife. Make golf courses more nature-friendly.

Achieve a critical mass, people want solutions now. Change education, policies, behaviors.

Reduce stigmas, have children ever grown/raised a plant?

Create backyard habitats, wildlife plantings, gardens. Apartments don’t always have backyards. Reclaim community spaces for nature and for gardens. Empower citizens to take action.

Don’t give up on our generation’s actions. Make a community/town sustainable for energy, food, water. Draw attention to examples. Use media, public education, social marketing.

What is nature? What are different perceptions? Our environment was developed with people, humans were part of nature. Europeans created areas with no human contact (wilderness). Humans planted pines, made weirs, grazed the land.

Every day is a memorable event in nature. How can we shift to awareness that nature is part of us?

### **Activity 3: Highest priority ways that we could enhance nature in our lives**

Bring more environment into the places we live. (12)

Acquire land now, before it’s developed. (9)

Teach and lead by example. (8)

Reach a critical mass, in valuing nature. (8)

Give nature experiences to schoolchildren. (4)

### **Activity 4: If you could wave a Magic Wand and have even more of (this priority) here in the San Diego region, what would it look like? What would it take to get this?**

#### **Bring more nature into places we live.**

Remind us that “humans are nature”

Develop curriculum, and convince communities this is important

Organize community gardens, teach people about community organizing.

Learn how to grow things, even in containers

Trade fruits and vegetables with neighbors and coworkers, an “informal farmers’ market”

Give pots and seeds and soil to every schoolchild to take home

More neighborhood parks with natural environments, creeks, picnic areas

Identify needs to broader audience, more than “my list”

Employers provide outdoor areas at work

More responsibility for land water, air, stewardship of natural resources

Tie to sustainable places (energy, water)

Start within cities, turn abandoned lots into gardens and parks

Create backyard and front yard habitats, with flower, native shrubs, vegetables, fruits

Establish butterfly gardens, follow exhibits at Water Conservation Garden and other places

Organize areas within homeowners’ associations

Happiness doesn’t come just from consumption

### **Get the land now!**

- Match money and willing sellers
- Get land donations, using tax shelters, planned giving, conservation easements
- Get foreclosure properties now, get some donated by banks
- Know who controls land in the community
- Support land trusts, leverage purchases, find someone to identify the leverage opportunities
- Identify “history” values of land
- Green tax shift, tax polluters more, lower tax for natural areas
- What land should we “get?” Different opinions. San Diego County is 50% open space but there are critical wildlife corridors needed
- What about degraded habitats in open space, should they also be acquired

### **Getting nature values to a “critical mass”**

- It takes money! For email lists, signing people up
- Strategic media plan, messages, audiences. What is the objective, for this critical mass?
- Use established AND new media
- Need events, controversy, examples, something for news media to cover
- One message is that consuming more does not give greater happiness. We are responsible for our taking care of or getting rid of possessions, before buying new ones. Why do we continue with planned obsolescence? We need to take care of what we have. How do we change these opinions?
- Ask the kids! (about news media)
- One missing message is how/why nature is important to humans. Why should children be learning about nature? Why gardens? Human civilization is dependent on healthy environments. All species, especially pollinators, importance of trees in civilization. Refer to Jared Diamond’s book *Collapse*. It is the responsibility of people to understand this.
- Media focus on San Diego, highlight visual changes in the past decade

## **APPENDIX D: Palomar College**

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

Facilitator: Catherine Blair

Scribe: Sharon Arbelaez

Fifteen people attended the appreciative inquiry meeting held at the Palomar College Student Union. The attendees were mostly students and some professors from Palomar and Cal State San Marcos. We were limited in time to one hour so we condensed the format somewhat.

### **Question #1: Think about a time when you were outdoors in nature...**

The responses reflected the diversity of experiences with nature that the San Diego region offers. The bay and rural areas were mentioned as well as pleasure in watching other people, including their children, enjoy their surroundings. Connection with the environment was stressed, as well as serenity, peace, the sounds of nature, the profusion of stars in the sky away from the city, a sense of

wonder. Besides visits to special places, common experiences were mentioned – hearing the chirping of birds, tending gardens, feeling a part of nature around their home on a daily basis.

Enjoying the bay and park. The beauty of San Diego - watching people enjoy the environment

Going to the rural areas. Seeing the scenery. Feeling connected with the environment.

Experienced a sense of self-sufficiency required in rural areas but not in the city.

Going out into the uninhabited areas. The pristine environment; wide- open ranges; serenity & peace; sounds of nature; sense of wonder.

Taking children hiking and seeing wildlife. Sharing wildlife with the next generation.

Nature is free – anyone can appreciate it.

When out in rural areas she makes up stories in her mind about the plants and animals; makes her feel connected to nature. No artificial lights and the amazing amount of stars. The experience creates memories; unstructured and unplanned. Random encounters with animals.

Daily experiences – birds chirping. Thinks about how the birds are going out to get their breakfast and he is going into the kitchen to get his. Thinks about how animals have to work so much harder to get their food than we do.

Time equals appreciation.

We are part of nature.

Having personal gardens.

## **Question #2: What would be necessary to make your experiences possible for future generations?**

More open spaces was mentioned, in urban areas and outlying regions, as well as the enhancement and preservation of existing spaces. More control over development is needed, a stop to building “a mall and Starbucks on every corner.” Invasive species are a threat with restoration and clean-up efforts needed as well as education about their harmful effects. Education is needed to teach people about all the dangers to our natural world. Scientific research is needed to develop alternatives for chemicals and materials that contaminate our water and land. More community gardens would be a positive thing for the environment.

More open spaces. Urban parks/green spaces within cities as well as large parcels of open space in outlying areas.

Enhance and preserve existing natural spaces.

Restore and clean up. Clear out and prevent invasive species.

More control over development. Quit building a mall and Starbucks on every corner.

Better PR for nature. More awareness of what nature has to offer.

Education about the real danger to our natural world.

Education about invasive species vs. natural habitats and species. Both on land and in water.

Develop alternatives for chemicals and materials that contaminate water and land.

More community gardens.

## **Themes:**

Education – 11 votes

Scientific Research – 11 votes

Conservation – 6 votes

Land acquisition and controlled growth – 6 votes

Public Policy – 5 votes

Individual responsibility and involvement – 3 votes

Access – 0 votes

**Magic Wand & Miracles:** Due to time constraints we did this only for the top two issues of education and research.

**Education:** Hands-on experiences - field trips, classroom lectures and demonstrations create personal connections. It's important to study man's place in nature, and how it evolved from primitive cultures, which relied on the natural world for survival. Teach the teachers, educate the policy makers, teach what individuals can do. Teach about local resources like water and natural habitats, stress smaller classrooms and community service. Introduce students to science early and put science into graduation requirements and into exit exams.

Touch-feel-smell. Need hands-on experiences. Both from field trips into nature and bringing nature into the classroom.

Create personal connections through the above experiences.

Study man's place in nature. The study of primitive cultures and how they relied on the natural world for survival.

Teach the teachers; basics of ecology.

Start young and continue for a lifetime. School years and beyond.

Educate the policy makers.

Learn about local resources: water, natural habitats.

Teach what individuals can do.

Have small classes in schools so teachers can give them more hands on experiences and really teach about nature.

Make community service required of all students.

Reality TV (don't remember what the connection was here)

Put science into graduation requirements and into the exit exams.

Introduce students to science early in life.

Teach from the historical approach – what it was like before we got here.

**Scientific Research:** Fund everyone, remove politics, encourage science internships for both high school and college students. Research topics that were mentioned include: how to prevent/stop harmful invasive species, develop affordable and sustainable energy, water conservation, how chemicals harm the environment and us, how toxic materials can be disposed of safely for the long-term, human impact on the environment, ratio of human activity vs. undeveloped areas, the effect of spillover from developed areas to undeveloped areas. Evidence-based research was stressed and the monitoring of change over time.

Fund everyone!

How to prevent/stop harmful invasive species.

Develop affordable and sustainable energy.

Study water conservation.

Study of how chemicals harm the environment; toxicity of products we use and how we are affected health-wise.

Human impact on the large scale; how we impact the environment.

Evidence-based research; monitoring change over time.

Spillover from developed areas to undeveloped areas.

Remove politics!

Ratio of human activity vs. undeveloped land.

Pre-program destruction. When creating new products plan how they will be safely destroyed later.

Pay students to work in labs and hold internships in both high school and college.

## **APPENDIX E: San Diego State University and the College Neighborhoods Foundation**

March 24, 2009

Facilitators Carmen Bianchi  
Leigh Hartman  
Scribes Laura Kyle  
Leigh Hartman

There were 12 attendees: seven SDSU students who are members of environmental advocacy groups (Enviro-Business Society and Green Love) and five representatives from the College Neighborhoods Foundation, who are leaders in neighborhood councils and associations surrounding the College Area.

### Wonderful outdoor memories

Cycling, walking or hiking in places like Torrey Pines, Montezuma Hill, Chollas Lake and Cowles Mountain; Drinking coffee on an outdoor patio; Sailing, surfing or swimming in the ocean; Walking the dog in the neighborhood or enjoying community parks; Climbing boulders in Santee

Feelings: Refreshed; optimistic; calmed; both connected to the natural world and introspective; powerless, connected to something greater than self; a sense of perspective; relaxed; exhilarated; empowered; free

### **What would it take, to experience more of this for yourself and others?**

A changed relationship with the surrounding world; noticing different things when you slow down; a sense of adventure; simplicity; one-ness with the world

Preserving nature; open space; carbon reduction; connectedness; safety; community engagement; simplicity; slowing down; cleanliness; community gardens; education; parent awareness; being engaged with nature; walkability; bike paths; interconnected public space; bringing nature closer to home or work; reducing visual clutter; active/healthy lifestyle; the importance of climate

### The three most important areas

Education (9 votes)  
Open space (9 votes)  
Community engagement (5 votes)

### Education

Setting examples through behavior (Reusable water bottles)  
Creating green demonstration projects  
Water-awareness

- Interactive, hands-on experiences
- Field trips for every student in every school
- Experiencing food/water sources firsthand
- Grey water and rain capture demonstrations
- Green living or eco-health curriculum K - 12
- Homeowner education
- Education “miracles”
- Mandatory green curriculum in all schools
- Environmental values integrated into the culture/inherent awareness
- Oil companies funding environmental values programs

### Open space

- “Hands-on” open space (not just to look at)
- Creative use of open space
- Joint use of park/school space
- Use of canyon space
- A changed understanding of personal/private property
- Urban parks/community gardens
- Interconnected public space
- Drought-tolerant and native landscaping
- Open space “miracles”
- Eliminate urban sprawl
- Smart growth
- Rooftop gardens
- Solar panels on every roof
- Take down power lines
- An improved Balboa Park
- Return Mission Valley to its original condition
- Turn every asphalt area into green space
- Underground streets and parking

### Community engagement

- Mandatory environmental community service
- “Green” block parties
- Beach and community cleanups
- Create a community compost heap
- Community gardens/farmers markets
- Community recycling centers
- Share-a-car/share-a-bike programs
- Create local neighborhood transportation hubs
- Shuttles to canyons
- “Green” cooking classes
- Community engagement “miracles”
- Re-shaped infrastructure
- Sustainable communities
- Cross-fertilization among community groups

## **APPENDIX F: Environment Discovery Team Meeting, April 9**

**Meeting purpose:** To combine what we learned from 54 experts, five community meetings, and our individual research to identify key principles for next year's environmental focus

### **What to avoid:**

- Existing geographical or topical areas that are already well-funded or that require bigger investments than we can provide
- Insistence on greater collaboration than environmental organizations have the bandwidth to support

**“Education”** is clearly the universal topic from both experts and community meetings, but what does this mean? We received many answers from many people (see below) but ultimately the common, heartfelt thread is **CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE** so that

1. People directly experience nature for themselves
2. They become aware of nature: its surprises, creativity, beauty, nurturance, and utility
3. People “get” the value of nature for their hearts, minds, bodies, spirits, families, communities, and their world
4. People's attitudes change to include a sense of personal stewardship and communal responsibility for valuing, protecting, and wisely using these valuable natural resources, places, and treasures
5. People demand and implement lifestyle and policy changes supportive of nature and the wise, sustainable use of nature's resources.

### **What does “environmental education” include?**

1. Free time out in nature
2. Moving through nature, learning to see what's there
3. Learning to appreciate nearby nature: backyards, pocket parks, nearby open space
4. Education tied to a specific call to action to address specific local quality of life threats/opportunities—water, carbon footprint, public transportation and alternate transportation, plastic bottles, recycling, San Diego Foundation Climate Change 2050 report—combined with
5. Structured hands-on activities to remedy/improve these environmental threats while increasing awareness and appreciation, such as waterway cleanup, canyonland improvement, other habitat restoration events such as in local land trusts, park development, school and community gardens, wildlife monitoring programs, and more
6. Environmental awareness training for diverse audiences: public officials, teachers, youth, families, interns, mentors, gatekeepers such as child care workers, scout leaders, church leaders, and others
7. Curricula for classrooms and in classrooms, bringing nature into the classroom
8. Transportation to get kids to nature
9. Engaging **NEW** people with true “nature-deficit disorder”, not just those who already know they want to spend time in nature
10. Programs and activities tied to the “natural treasures” of specific communities, so that we build community while building nature connections

**Summary:** Disconnected intellectual (head) education is not enough – we want true internal engagement of the previously unengaged, calls to action beyond just information, hands-on activities that engage communities and not just individuals. We especially like Laura’s wording as a start: *Nature conservation/preservation programs that involve young and old in hands-on activities that foster awareness and a sense of personal responsibility for the environment.*

**Concepts we might address in the Members’ Survey**

1. Audience: children, families, gatekeepers, teachers, volunteers, interns, mentors, public officials
2. Tools: curricula, leaders, activities
3. Outcomes: what results to measure regarding attitudes, knowledge, engagement, physical results, advocacy, and other outcomes
4. Geography: backyards, parks, gardens, waterways, canyonlands, and other nearby open spaces

**Other topics/thoughts**

1. We were especially impressed and touched by the passionate, informed, engaged students we met in our community meetings – a great advantage going forward. It is also clear that the outdoors is already important to many San Diegans. A related note: childhood experiences in nature were key to almost all of our local experts’ current involvement in the environment.
2. Next year, make sure at least one environmental community meeting specifically involves minorities or underserved. Different geographies were well represented but not underserved. In the Tijuana Estuary, Muriel met inner-city kids who had never seen a horse.
3. Coordinate with other funding organizations to increase impact and avoid overlap. Strongest results usually come from collaborative, cooperative actions and/or coalitions.
4. Use media as an educational tool and way to reach new people. Explore ways to increase media coverage of our learning, progress, and partners.
5. Also, look for creative ways to engage members, politicians, and communities outside of our funded projects. For example, use the Annual Meeting in January to invite local politicians to join our members in planning, implementing, or completing hands-on environmental improvement activity/activities.