

Healthy Bodies, Healthy Spaces Abstracts

The Community Benefits of Recreation, Jim Smith, LA County Parks

The community benefits of recreation are the social, health, educational and economic well being of children and families, as well as the environmental benefits, including the conservation of resources and the moderation of climate change. Open space and recreation provide synergistic benefits such as linkages between parks, open space and trails, as well as providing urban relief, connectivity to wild lands, national forests and regional parks, all of which enhance the quality of life in the entire region.

How Can Humans Inhabit Habitat - Along with Other Critters? Jennifer Wolch, USC Center for Sustainable Cities

Restoration of land for watershed protection in the metropolitan region will bring wildlife back into the city, where they are apt to come into more frequent contact with the city's human residents. The increased presence of urban wildlife presents a complex mosaic of opportunities and constraints for both people and wildlife alike.

Food and other garbage discarded by recreationists may provide wildlife with additional calories, and thus influence the reproductive rates, litter sizes, and body sizes of scavenging animals. Exploitation, disturbance, habitat modification and pollution are also common anthropogenic effects in urban open space, causing results including behavioral changes, reduced reproductive success, and habitat destruction. In turn, people may benefit from interaction with wildlife through increased residential property values, mental well being, stress relief, improved communication skills, affirmation of personal, spiritual, and aesthetic values, and economic benefits deriving from tourism and even increased agricultural productivity. But residents and park users may also be concerned about animal attacks on recreationists and on pets, the spread of disease, nuisance activities such as animals foraging through trash, harm to private property through nesting, erosion, garden damage, structural damage, and vehicle collision. Challenges for both people and animals can be successfully managed, however, through the use of a series of best practices. These management strategies include neighborhood outreach and education efforts, stringent park-space ordinances, wildlife-friendly infrastructure, and zoning strategies. By using such approaches in the appropriate contexts, watershed restoration efforts can bring animals back to the city and thus enhance the ecological functioning of metropolitan watersheds as well as the life of urban residents.

Reaching out to Communities, How can we be more effective on a local and regional scale; can social education get us to healthy watersheds?, Belinda Faustinos, San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy

The original "by line" for this presentation was "*Where do we meet you half-way,*" which is, in many ways, the absolute wrong approach to community outreach. Some of the most successful projects, both

environmental and social, have their roots in community sponsorship and passion for a particular outcome. In this presentation I will use several case studies to demonstrate how community passion and ownership has resulted in highly successful projects and conversely how other projects have encountered set-backs because they were not well founded with community support. Other factors that will be explored: defining your project “community”, short and long term engagement techniques, addressing *NIMBY* issues, resistance to change and long term stewardship. Regional scale projects perhaps have strong challenges for reaching out to communities; I will explore some of these challenges in the SG River watershed for projects such as the Integrated Regional Watershed Management Plan, the SG River Corridor Master Plan, and Green Visions. Issues to be explored are: *What is the appropriate scale for community involvement? Who pays? Who are the appropriate conduits for outreach? What are the most effective techniques for community engagement?* Lastly “*Getting Your Feet Wet with Social Marketing*”, A Social Marketing Guide for Watershed Programs by Jack Wilbur, Utah Department of Agriculture and Food can serve as vision for us in considering how we can ultimately reach our goal of “Healthy Bodies and Healthy Spaces”: “*By successfully implementing awareness and social marketing campaigns in your watershed, municipality or county, individuals and groups will take on and sustain actions that will save water, improve the condition of the watershed and reduce pollution.*” Can we make this work in our region; what are the existing and future resources to undertake such a campaign?

Public Health: Is our community (medically) healthy? Frank Meza, Kaiser-Permanente

According to the Center for Disease Control, an estimated two out of three American adults, and more than one in six American children, are considered overweight or obese. They also say that only about 25% of adults engage in the minimum recommended amount of daily physical activity. In Los Angeles alone, with its 3.8 million urban residents, that means 2.5 million adults and over 630,000 children are not only unfit, but dangerously overweight.

In a dense urban landscape like Los Angeles, the importance of access to physically and mentally beneficial opportunities cannot be overstated. Parks, playgrounds, trails, and community open spaces can solve our health issues by providing the opportunity for regular exercise as well as an escape from the urban jungle. So how do we explain that nearly 67% of children in Los Angeles County do not live within walking distance of a park, playground or open space? And how do we work with communities and decision makers to help them recognize the importance of the health benefits of open spaces? Reimagining the benefits of open spaces in terms of our physical and mental health will not only improve our access to open spaces, but can be the key to saving many lives through improved health.