

DATE: January 27, 2009

TO: Board of Supervisors

**SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND PASSPORT PROGRAM AT
SAN DIEGO COUNTY PARKS (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

Overview:

“Staycation” is quickly becoming a common word in the American vocabulary. This is a vacation that is taken close to home due to current economic circumstances. Staycations are increasingly becoming the best option for families impacted by the recent economic uncertainties. As spring and summer approach, and families starting thinking about a viable alternative for an economically efficient vacation, the County’s parks and recreation network provides a great opportunity.

With the residents of San Diego County staying relatively close to home, what better time to reintroduce them to the natural, cultural and historical assets they possess in their own county. One way to educate these people about the County’s Parks and Recreation system is to provide an Environmental Education and Passport Program which will invite and challenge the families of San Diego to visit and explore the existing parks and preserves the County has to offer.

The County of San Diego’s Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) can take the lead in creating and implementing this program that can reach out to “staycationers” and visitors alike. DPR can deliver a user-friendly environmental education and passport program to encourage families to enjoy and learn more about the local natural, historical and cultural resources.

Recommendation(s)

SUPERVISOR PAM SLATER-PRICE:

1. Direct the CAO to work with the County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation to examine the cost of creating and implementing a County-wide Environmental Education Program and Passport program.
2. Direct the CAO to report back to the Board of Supervisors in 180 days with recommendations for creating and implementing a County-wide Environmental Education Program and Passport program and providing associated costs.

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Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact associated with these recommendations.

Background:

The County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) operates nine camping parks, seven regional picnic parks, and over 44,000 acres of park land and open space, with 300 miles of trails, two historic adobes, and 10 historic park sites. The Department's mission is to provide opportunities for high quality parks and recreation experiences and to preserve regionally significant natural and cultural resources.

Many families are interested in shorter, cost-effective vacations that provide quality family time. Our County parks offer residents affordable opportunities for recreational activities such as hiking, fishing, and camping. This specific program will connect local residents with those opportunities at our existing facilities.

The Environmental Education and Passport Program will provide families with a County passport to commemorate attendance at education programs offered at designated County parks throughout the region. Rangers will stamp the passports to confirm completion of the Program and, once the Passport is completed, issue a certificate to acknowledge the participant as an Official San Diego County Naturalist. Passport Programs are being successfully implemented in other areas, such as Orange County.

Expanding environmental education efforts through an Environmental Education and Passport Program would fit into the DPR's FY 2008-09 Strategic Initiative for the Environment by promoting recreational opportunities and environmental awareness for youth by conducting environmental education programs with an emphasis on water quality, watershed awareness, and natural and cultural resources.

A comprehensive Environmental Education and Passport Program will focus on the environment and will showcase the immense value each County park has to its surrounding communities. It will create additional motivation for families, young people, schools and other organizations to participate locally and include incentives such as passport stamps and "Official Naturalist" certificates.

Respectfully submitted,

PAM SLATER-PRICE
SUPERVISOR,
THIRD DISTRICT

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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA ITEM
INFORMATION SHEET

**SUBJECT: ESTABLISHING A PASSPORT PROGRAM FOR SAN DIEGO
COUNTY'S PARKS (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

SUPV. DIST.: Three

COUNTY COUNSEL APPROVAL: Form and Legality () Yes () N/A
() Standard Form () Ordinance () Resolution
Review Board Letter Only: [] Yes [] No

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER REVIEW: () Yes (X) No
4 VOTES: () Yes (X) No

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES [] Yes [X] No

CONTRACT REVIEW PANEL: () Approved (X) N/A

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTION: N/A

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE: N/A

CITIZEN COMMITTEE STATEMENT: N/A

CONCURRENCES: N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: District Three

CONTACT PERSON(S): Mark Olson 531-5533 MS A500
Sachiko Kohatsu 531-5533 MS A500

DEPARTMENT AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

MEETING DATE