

Assemblymember Mark Stone
California State Assembly
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0029

February 21, 2014

RE: Support for AB 1603

Dear Assemblymember Stone:

I am writing on behalf of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council (council) to express our strong support for your Assembly Bill 1603, which will provide a funding mechanism in the California Department of Parks and Recreation to support outdoor environmental education programs.

Few funding sources now exist for outdoor environmental education even though it has been shown to enhance academic achievement, critical thinking and lifetime environmental stewardship among students. Studies have found that outdoor environmental education has a profound beneficial impact, particularly on lower income youth.

In 2012, San Jose State University Master's candidate Lauren Hanneman studied the long term effect of O'Neill Sea Odyssey's free, ocean-going science program on students, 75% of students who participated in the program 5-7 years previously retained environmental knowledge of non-point source pollution based on the program's ecology curriculum.

In 2005, a study commissioned by the California Department of Education showed that low-income students who attended outdoor school significantly raised their science scores by 27 percent, as measured by a pre- and post-survey administered immediately upon their return to school. It also showed that low income students who've attended outdoor programs had a significant gain in "concern for conservation". The research also found an increase in the "attitude towards science" category. Children who attended outdoor education programs showed an increase in five areas: self-esteem, leadership, relationship with teacher(s), cooperation, and conflict resolution. The study, conducted by the American Institutes for Research, was called "Effects of Outdoor Education Programs for Children in California".

Thank you very much for your efforts to pass this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Kirk Schmidt
Chair