

T 2025 SCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW

City of Santa Cruz Water Department Education Programs

The City of Santa Cruz Water Department offers free, science-based, and discovery - driven water education programs for schools and the general public in our water service area and in our local drinking water source watersheds.

Schools Programs

Our schools programs implement standards-based science teaching while offering a place-based opportunity to learn about water and environmental stewardship. We currently provide school programs to four school districts in the county: Santa Cruz City Schools, San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District, Bonny Doon, and Live Oak.

Schools served by City Water Department programs are located within the City's drinking water source watersheds and water service areas. These include Bonny Doon and San Lorenzo Valley elementary schools, San Lorenzo Valley Middle School and San Lorenzo Valley High School, Westlake, Bay View, De Laveaga, Gault, Monarch, Live Oak, Del Mar and Green Acres elementary schools.



Santa Cruz City Schools and Live Oak schools

Students in these programs spend a day immersed in their drinking water watershed. Students explore where their water comes from, what shares the watershed with them, and how their actions can affect water quality and quantity in the watershed. The program is free, includes transportation, teacher resources and a grade-level assembly.

This program is currently limited to 5th grade classes in select public schools within the City of Santa Cruz Water Department's service area.



- In FY 25 the program provided watershed education to approximately 404 unique students for ~36 hours.

San Lorenzo Valley High School

The Watershed Academy at San Lorenzo Valley High School is an educational program offered to a small group of San Lorenzo Valley High School students to take a deeper dive into environmental science and local water resources. We conduct several field trips within the watershed to understand watershed processes, fisheries, land use and drinking water source protection in a "skyline to the sea" context.

Additionally, City staff occasionally participate in career

day panels, serve as mentors for independent studies and related activities. The program emphasizes workforce development and exposes students to many careers in the water and environmental sector.



- In FY 25 the program provided education to 15 students for 16 hours.

San Lorenzo Valley Elementary & Middle School

Since 2010 the City of Santa Cruz Water Department has sponsored the Coastal Watershed Council - led watershed education program at San Lorenzo Valley Elementary and Middle School. The focus of the program is on environmental science, endangered species protection and watershed protection.

In FY 25 the program improved the Watershed Rangers curriculum to include lesson series for each grade from kindergarten through seventh grade to continue to support grade-level Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and Common Core Standards; coordinated, collaborated with, and supported 6 teachers with classroom visits; presented 42 classroom and field-based lessons; and engaged 146 students in hands-on activities educating them about local environmental issues and sustainable practices.

Bonny Doon Elementary School

Since 2013 the City of Santa Cruz Water Department has awarded a watershed science grant to the Bonny Doon Elementary School science program. The program engages students in activities related to drinking water source protection and endangered species issues, using classroom teaching, demonstrations, and hands-on activities specifically focused on their local watersheds.

- In FY 25, the program provided watershed education to 93 students at Bonny Doon Elementary.

Other schools

On occasion, other schools are also offered interpretive hike opportunities at Loch Lomond. These hikes are limited by staff availability and are also restricted to schools with the City of Santa Cruz Water Department service area and drinking water source watersheds.

- In FY 25 we provided educational programs to approximately 60 3rd grade students from 3 local schools.

Trout in the Classroom

Trout in the Classroom is a program run cooperatively by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, local schools, government agencies, and non-profits. The program provides resources and expert advice to create an aquatic environment in the classroom and to raise trout eggs in a classroom aquarium. Students engage in course over 8 weeks as the trout develop and the program culminates in releasing the young trout in Loch Lomond Reservoir. Students from all of Santa Cruz County and from as far away as Half Moon Bay. On occasion, classes are also able to engage in informal interpretive events with Loch Lomond staff as part of their release day.

- In FY 25 approximately 80 students from 5 classes participated in the program.

For more information on this program please see the following link: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/CAEP/R3>

Other Programs

Loch Walks

City staff and contractors conduct several “Loch Walks” every year. These interpretive walks are focused on the natural history and water resources of local watersheds. These events are open to the public and free of charge. They occasionally occur during times when Loch Lomond is otherwise closed to the public – giving attendees a unique opportunity to experience the serene beauty of the Newell Creek watershed. Attendance is usually limited to 10-25 participants for each event.



Newell Jewell Tours

City staff also lead monthly, free public boat tours of Loch Lomond focused on City of Santa Cruz water operations and the natural history of Loch Lomond. Notably, the City has participated in the “Secchi Dip-In” as part of these tours for many years. Attendance of these tours is limited by Newell Jewell capacity and ranges from 10-25 participants for each event.

State of the San Lorenzo River Symposium

The “State of the San Lorenzo River Symposium” is an annual event hosted by the City of Santa Cruz Water Department, the County of Santa Cruz, the Coastal Watershed Council, the Resource Conservation District, and the San Lorenzo Valley Water District. At the symposium local experts present on the science, history, and policies related to the San Lorenzo River Watershed. Presentations are recorded and provided on our website at: <http://tinyurl.com/soslrs>. The Symposium was not held in 2025 as the annual Salmonid Restoration Federation Conference was held in Santa Cruz this year. Both events cover similar subject matter and would have been held mere weeks apart.

Salmonid Restoration Conference

In 2025, Salmonid Restoration Federation produced the 42nd Annual Salmonid Restoration Conference in Santa Cruz. The conference focused on a broad range of salmonid and watershed restoration topics of concern to restoration practitioners, watershed scientists, fisheries biologists, resource agency personnel, land-use planners, and landowners. City staff presented to hundreds of attendees at 3 distinct presentations and field trips. You can see some of the presentations here:

<https://www.calsalmon.org/conferences/42nd-annual-salmonid-restoration-conference/presentations>

Interpretive Signage

We install and maintain signs to promote awareness of local water resource management issues, identify waterbodies, watershed boundaries, source water protection zones, and sensitive habitat areas. Much of this work has been done in partnership with other agencies such as the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, National Marine Fisheries Services, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the City of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department.

Miscellaneous Events

Resources allowing, we also participate in a handful of other citizen and public outreach activities including: “Snapshot Day”, “First Flush”, “Secchi Dip-In Day”, Loch Lomond Open House, “Clean Water Day”, “Connecting the Drops”, Salmonid Restoration Federation Conferences and more!

For more information about the City of Santa Cruz Water Department watershed education programs, please see the following link:

<https://www.santacruzca.gov/Government/City-Departments/Water-Department/Education-Programs>

