

Project Title: * Paradise Creek Nature Park Ambassadors After School Program

To be eligible for the grant, projects should be specifically tied to one or more of the following topics (Choose all that apply) *

- Waste Reduction
- Water Conservation
- Recycling and the 3 Rs
- The Water Cycle
- Source Water Protection
- Litter Prevention and Cleanups
- Watershed Education (as related to drinking water)
- Native Plant and/or Pollinator-Friendly Gardens
- Impacts of Fats, Oils, and Grease on Wastewater Systems

Amount Requested: * 500.00

Teacher / Leader's Name: * Sarah Sumoski

School or Organization Name & Complete Address: *

The Elizabeth River Project
475 Water Street C103A
Portsmouth, VA 23704

Subject / Grade / Age Range: * 8th Grade, Ages 12-14

Number of Children: * 15

Goals & Objectives: *

For the third year in a row, the non-profit Elizabeth River Project is teaming up with Hampton Roads Area Young Life and Cradock Middle School to offer a unique 7-week after school program for 8th graders at their neighborhood park, the 40-acre Paradise Creek Nature Park, in Portsmouth, VA. For most students at Cradock Middle School, despite being less than a mile from the park, their interaction with the outdoors is limited to non-existent, both in and out of the classroom. Their low Standards of Learning science scores reflect this disconnect with nature. This transformative program brings students to the park for hands on learning and a place-based learning experience in nature. New this year, student will be among the first to experience brand new amenities at the park which include a Wetlands Learning Lab outdoor classroom and Canoe/Kayak launch. The addition of the canoe/kayak launch offers students the opportunity to get up close with the park's wetland waters, something previously only observable from a distance. In addition to this unique learning experience, students will work to design and build a new education feature at the park becoming engaged in the community as Park Ambassadors and stewards of the Elizabeth River.

Students will:

- Learn key science SOL's in a fun, engaging, and hands on way, including watershed and wetland ecology, native and invasive plants, food web dynamics, and forest health (SOL's covered: BIO 8, LS 6,7,8,9,11). Students will also learn valuable stewardship actions such as: scooping the poop, keeping storm drains clear, and not pouring grease down sinks, among others.

- Become engaged community volunteers through the hands on brainstorm, design, and creation of a new education feature at Paradise Creek Nature Park. This year the proposed education feature is a bird blind which allows park visitors to observe birds in their native habitat without disturbance. The bird blind, constructed of privacy fencing, will include an educational mural which displays native birds and other wildlife observable at Paradise Creek Nature Park; acting as a prominent painted field guide. This bird blind will be used during ranger led education programs and park visitors looking for interactive ways to explore without a guide. Over 5,000 park visitors are estimated to experience the feature each year.

- Make friends and gain confidence while becoming environmental stewards, gaining hands on experiences and improving their resume as Park Ambassadors.

- Learn from Paradise Creek Nature Park's Urban Park Ranger and connect with Hampton Roads Area Young Life introducing them to mentors and prominent role models in the community.

- Complete pre/post tests to gauge the information learned through this experience. Previous years have shown 25% gains in knowledge on the definition of a watershed, and 80% increase knowledge on the Elizabeth River's footprint.

Project Timeline: *

- March 22: In classroom - introductory meeting, icebreakers, and pre-tests
- March 29: Spring Break – no meeting
- April 5: At park - introduction to Paradise Creek Nature Park, the wetland, Elizabeth River Watershed, water quality testing, nature journaling, meeting with local birding expert to help select the location of the bird blind
- April 12: In classroom - planning bird blind mural, choosing and researching elements to include
- April 19: At park – helping with installation of bird blind, tracing out mural design, introduction to native and invasive plants.
- April 26: In classroom – developing education strategies to incorporate bird blind into existing programs at Paradise Creek Nature Park
- May 3: At park – final touches to bird blind mural
- May 10: In classroom – wrapping up the program, feedback, post tests, celebration of our hard work!
- May 24: Summary submission

Project Budget: *

Young Life Van Rental and transportation costs to and from park (\$105 x 3):\$315.00

Supplies to construct bird blind and paint mural (fencing, quickcrete cement, paint and brushes, etc.): \$125.00

Materials to enhance education experience (supplies for games, snacks and drinks, education tools, etc.): \$60.00

Total: \$500.00

Match:

Paradise Creek Nature Park Urban Park Ranger Salary.....Elizabeth River Project
Program Funds: \$370.00

Young Life Hampton Roads Program Leader Salary.....Elizabeth River Project Program
Funds: \$700.00

Name: * Sarah Sumoski

Email: * ssumoski@elizabethriver.org

Phone Number: * (757) 399-7487

All information in this application is correct. I have reviewed the proposal with my school principal or organizational leader. As a condition of accepting the mini-grant money, I understand that I will be required to complete and submit the project summary form and pictures from the project upon completion of this project. I will submit my summary report within 14 days of completion. *

By checking the box and submitting this form, I certify the above.

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