



August 10, 2009

Mr. David Merk  
San Diego Unified Port District  
PO Box 120488  
San Diego, CA 92112-0488

Dear Mr. Merk:

For the past five years, Project SWELL (Stewardship: Water Education for Lifelong Leadership) has been educating local students about the importance of safe, healthy waters in San Diego. We are pleased to report that in 2008-2009, the Project SWELL curricula reached more than 40,000 students in San Diego County with hands-on pollution prevention lessons, inspiring our youngest residents to protect our local water resources.

As a result of your generous support, San Diego Coastkeeper implemented and maintained Project SWELL curricula in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms in San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms in Oceanside Unified School District (OUSD). We introduced new teacher feedback forms and piloted a formal student evaluation form in 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms to assess teacher's and student's experiences and the effectiveness of the curricula. We expect that the results will help us improve their education through Project SWELL in the future. In addition, we developed and piloted a Kindergarten curriculum and are making final edits to fully implement the lessons in SDUSD this year. We also plan to pilot and implement 6<sup>th</sup> grade lessons in OUSD this year. The introduction of these new grade level curricula will expand Project SWELL by almost 10,000 students this year, bringing our total reach to 50,000 students throughout San Diego County next year.

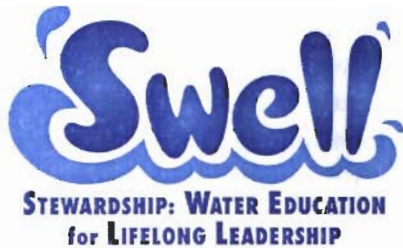
The enclosed report highlights Project SWELL's activities and accomplishments in 2008-2009, which would not have been possible without your support. Thank you again for supporting this important science-based environmental education program! If you have any questions about this report, please don't hesitate to contact me at (619) 758-7743, ext. 112 or [Jennifer@sdcoastkeeper.org](mailto:Jennifer@sdcoastkeeper.org).

Best Regards,

Jennifer Black  
Education Director

## 2008-2009 Project SWELL Report

Project SWELL is San Diego Coastkeeper's hands-on K-12 environmental education curricula that promotes awareness of clean water and pollution prevention and fosters a sense of environmental stewardship in children.



Project SWELL lessons align with the State Science Content Standards and the Science Framework for California Public Schools and meet the environmental learning objectives set out by California Department of Education. The interactive hands-on format of Project SWELL lessons is a resource-intensive pedagogy, so the experience is engaging to children whose lessons are frequently

book-based. This unique education program complements existing science lessons with hands-on lessons that are adapted to teach students about issues in their own community. Project SWELL promotes sustainable improvement to the health of our ailing watersheds by engaging children—the leaders of the future—as advocates for responsible stewardship of our ocean and waterways.

Project SWELL reaches a particularly diverse and often underrepresented group of students, almost 40 percent of whom are Latino, one-third of whom are in the process of learning English, and 62 percent of whom qualify for free or reduced-price meals. With the current overall state budget crisis added to other socio-economic factors, the schools these children attend are frequently under-resourced and without access to innovative and engaging hands-on science education curricula. Project SWELL offers them a unique opportunity to explore their local ecosystems, learn how changes to daily behavior have a significant impact on the health and sustainability of their community, and become inspired as environmental stewards.



During 2008-2009, Coastkeeper updated and edited the existing Project SWELL grade-level lessons (2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grades) to meet the science curriculum adoption year requirements and secured the materials needed to fully supply participating schools with updated kits that enabled Project SWELL to continue to be taught in classrooms. In addition, we developed and piloted a formal student evaluation form in 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms this year to better understand students' experiences with the lessons and how to improve their education through Project SWELL. Student evaluations will be implemented in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> & Kindergarten classrooms this academic year. We also introduced teacher feedback forms to assess teachers' experiences teaching the lessons and to receive feedback on how to improve the lessons in the future. The lessons are currently taught in 130 elementary schools in San

Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) and 18 schools in Oceanside Unified School District (OUSD), reaching more than 40,000 students every year.



Coastkeeper staff conducted several community education/outreach events based on Project SWELL lessons to ensure that students without access to hands-on science kits in their classroom are able to experience the benefit of Project SWELL's unique learning system, reaching more than 1,000 additional students. These hands-on activities empower them with skills to become active participants in keeping local waterways safe and healthy for all San Diegans to enjoy. This means that students continue to receive

environmental education that builds in them awareness of pollution prevention and a sense of stewardship for the natural resources of San Diego County.

Cherokee Point Elementary School fourth grade students presented a Project SWELL lesson on marine debris to the San Diego Unified School District Board of Education Directors during the March 2009 Board of Education meeting. Superintendent Terry Grier and Board Member Richard Barrera joined the students as they demonstrated how a dolphin would not be able to eat very well and could starve to death if a plastic six-pack ring got entangled on its snout or on a fin.



Project SWELL provides a tremendous benefit for a wide range of stakeholders throughout San Diego, including students, San Diego Unified School District and Oceanside Unified School District, the City of San Diego and our coastal environment. Many San Diego business leaders support Project SWELL as its hands-on, active investigation enhances overall science learning which is needed to support the growth of clean-technology/high-technology in the region. Project SWELL also helps the City of San Diego and SDUSD and OUSD comply with requirements of the region's Municipal Stormwater Permit, while helping Coastkeeper promote stewardship for our natural environment and empower our future leaders with the tools to improve San Diego's coast and waterways.

The success that Project SWELL enjoys has attracted the attention of other school districts throughout the County. We will continue to build on strong relationships with school districts and continue to work with a professional curriculum writer to ensure that this unique environmental education program can be made available to as many students as possible. Ultimately, Coastkeeper aims to reach every student in San Diego County with Project SWELL lessons. Our strategy is to expand the program within currently participating

schools, drawing on our valuable partnership with the SDUSD, and then regionally by adapting lessons for new school partners.



During Academic Year 2009-2010, we look forward to the Project SWELL curricula being taught to approximately 50,000 students in five grades in SDUSD – including the implementation of our new Kindergarten curriculum, being taught for the first time this year – and in two grade levels in OUSD. Coastkeeper plans to begin developing the 1<sup>st</sup> grade curriculum in late 2009, with its implementation targeted for the 2010-11 school year. In addition, Coastkeeper plans to coordinate an environmental education forum that will bring together educators, agencies, and non-profit groups offering environmental education programs that will bridge classroom learning with real-world experience and to improve both

Project SWELL and environmental education programs throughout San Diego County.

The accomplishments of 2009-2009 were made possible by the generous support of our partners and donors. Their affirmation of the Project SWELL mission confirms that now, more than ever, San Diego Coastkeeper must continue its ambitious plans to expand Project SWELL to reach each of the students in San Diego County. We look forward to exciting developments in 2009–2010 and continuing the invaluable partnerships that will them possible.