

Outdoor Classroom an Oasis for Students

A recent purchase agreement between Sempra Natural Gas Plant (Mesquite) and Salt River Project resulted in the Mesquite Wildlife Oasis, outdoor classroom continuing.

The class site is on the corner of the natural gas plant

Connecting students with nature has been goal of the outdoor classroom concept over the past seven years at the Mesquite Wildlife Oasis.

This season (October- March) over 3,000 students in grades 2-12 will learn about wildlife, plants, insects, and the geology of the Sonoran desert.

The Oasis classes provide multiple stations, handout material, plus 'field work' covering a specific part of the natural environment reinforces the student's current curriculum.

The primary focus for students from nearby school districts including Saddle Mountain, Arlington, and Palo Verde. West Valley schools fill the remaining outdoor class days.

Teachers, subject material, and the school district's transportation costs are supported by the Wildlife for Tomorrow Foundation. Also, Arizona Game & Fish aids the curriculum with experts and wildlife. "The Mesquite power station staff (Sempra) have been a great help", Vasiloff said. The staff created the initial site at the old farm, have continued to make improvements, and they keep an eye on the remote site, she said.

During recent seasons, attendance has grown to over 3,000 students who visit the Mesquite Wildlife Oasis and learn from experience with hands-on and hands-into the natural environment!



West Valley View article from 2008:

<http://www.westvalleyview.com/print.asp?ArticleID=30932&SectionID=2&SubSectionID=1>

MESQUITE WILDLIFE OASIS

- ❖ Each year over 3,000 students learn about nature in the unique outdoor classroom found at the Mesquite Wildlife Oasis.
- ❖ Designed for grades 2-12 it is accessible for nearby and regional school districts. Saddle Mountain, Arlington, and Palo Verde districts have students that visit the outdoor classroom each season between October & March.
- ❖ The Mesquite Wildlife Oasis outdoor classroom has developed a curriculum that is aligned to state educational standards for each grade level. These field trips are linked to material being covered at the student's grade level.
- ❖ Site includes hiking trails that lead to stations where subjects are covered. Native trees and bushes line the trails so children can see a variety of Sonoran Desert plants.
- ❖ Three stations are used for classes about wildlife. Arizona Game and Fish Department aid the classes by providing wildlife including birds and animals.
- ❖ The site also has a small pond that is used for teaching children about water testing.
- ❖ A new addition, "Rocks that Rock", help students learn about igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rocks.
- ❖ Director Heidi Vasiloff, along with five teachers now cover an expanding curriculum of 20 classes. Classes include: Traits of Mammals (what makes a mammal a mammal), Hooo Is Here (about Great Horned Owl), Properties of Water (temperature and pH testing) and the Mighty Mesquite Tree (one of the Sonoran Deserts most important trees)!
- ❖ Funding for these school field trips, (teachers, materials, and transportation costs) is provided by grants from Wildlife for Tomorrow Foundation and aid from Mesquite Power natural gas plant (Sempra U.S Gas & Power). Plus, the Tonopah Area Coalition members have donated funds for a group of binoculars.
- ❖ Staff at the Mesquite power station created the layout and continue to make improvements to the Mesquite Wildlife Oasis Outdoor Classroom site. The Mesquite Wildlife Oasis is located on property restored with native plants and currently owned by Sempra U.S. Gas & Power. The recent Salt River Project proposal is to purchase half of the plant's turbine system (625 megawatts) and manage the entire plant.