



LOS ANGELES
WATERKEEPER®

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Los Angeles Waterkeeper Partners with Local Non-Profits to Educate At-Risk Youth

July 1, 2014 (Los Angeles, CA) — Los Angeles Waterkeeper is partnering with local non-profit organizations Venice YouthBuild and New Earth in an effort to educate at-risk youth about environmental issues and expand community involvement to raise awareness about their mission to protect and restore LA County waterways and oceans. Youth from both programs are spending their volunteer hours on LA Waterkeeper's Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Watch Boat Trips.

Venice YouthBuild is a service of Venice Community Housing (VCH), which provides permanent, affordable housing to low-income people in and around Venice. In 2013, VCH housed over 500 people, including 150 children and 160 formerly homeless individuals. Venice YouthBuild is a program that provides education, job training and leadership development services to 40 out-of-school and out-of-work youth ages 17 to 24 each year to help them transition into successful adulthoods.

"LA Waterkeeper has already made a transformative impact on the lives of the youth who participated in the first two volunteer trips we've gone on," said Omar A. Muhammad, YouthBuild Director of Venice Community Housing. "This partnership not only helps us fulfill our core values of empowerment, social justice and positive transformation, it also encourages community leadership and service. Where else are inner city 'opportunity' youth being exposed first-hand to the importance of keeping our ocean waters safe for marine and land creatures alike?"

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are areas of the ocean where consumptive human activities such as fishing are limited or restricted in order to protect and conserve marine life. LA Waterkeeper's MPA Watch volunteer program conducts regular, on the water outreach and education trips to monitor human uses of the Santa Monica Bay water in and around the restricted fishing areas. Volunteers are trained on-board the Waterkeeper boat to crew the trips, collect data, and educate the fishing community about the MPAs. For groups like Venice YouthBuild and New Earth, this program is the first and only opportunity for participants to see the ocean and marine life in its natural habitat.

"For nearly one year, New Earth has collaborated with LA Waterkeeper to invite youth involved with New Earth's programs to volunteer on MPA Watch," said Harry Grammer, Founder/CEO of New Earth Organization. "After each Waterkeeper trip the young men have talked about having a renewed sense of feeling alive, living on purpose, and contributing to a worthy cause. Many of them have never been on a boat in the ocean and these trips have made a huge impact on the way they see the world."

New Earth is a non-profit organization that creates new worlds for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated youth. Their programs take their students from correction to introspection to new direction; helping release self-imposed and social barriers to realize their full potential. They aim to do this through innovative arts, educational-based mentorship, and post-release programs that stimulate positive growth and promote systematic change.

“The volunteers from New Earth and Venice YouthBuild serve as citizen scientists surveying human activity in and around Marine Protected Areas during our MPA Watch Boat Trips. The youths take part in an experiential learning process that builds new skills while opening up new perspectives on how our interactions with each other affects the earth, its oceans, and our sense of community,” said Michael Quill, Community Programs Manager for Los Angeles Waterkeeper. “The youth and I continue to learn from each other as we build bridges of dialogue and connection between our diverse communities, and break down barriers that prevent education.”

LA Waterkeeper will be taking New Earth and Venice YouthBuild participants on MPA Watch Boat Trips monthly for the upcoming year with a goal of educating and empowering LA County’s at-risk youth, and providing new opportunities for a brighter future for us all.

For further information, please contact Rachel Stich at (310) 394-6162 x108.

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ABOUT LOS ANGELES WATERKEEPER

Founded in 1993, LA Waterkeeper’s mission is to protect and restore Santa Monica Bay, San Pedro Bay, and adjacent waters through enforcement, fieldwork, and community action. We work to achieve this goal through litigation and regulatory programs that ensure water quality protections in waterways throughout L.A. County. LA Waterkeeper’s Litigation & Advocacy, Marine, and Water Quality teams conduct interconnected projects that serve this mission.