

Memorandum of Understanding

Between South Yuba River Citizens League & Sierra Academy of Expeditionary Learning

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU or Agreement) is executed by and between the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) on one hand and the Sierra Academy of Expeditionary Learning (SAEL) on the other.

The vision of the South Yuba River Citizens League is to: *"Unite the community to protect and restore the Yuba River. Motivated by our love for this watershed, we advocate powerfully, engage in active stewardship, educate the public, and inspire activism from the Sierra to the sea."*

SYRCL is one of the oldest and most successful river advocacy non profits in the Western USA. Their belief that "People Can Save a River" is deeply steeped in their successful lobbying for Wild and Scenic designation for the South Yuba River, therein preventing its damming. It is, *"(t)his founding premise (that) empowers us to take collective action against real threats, emboldens us to be effective leaders and advocates, and inspires us to change the world while having fun along the way."*

The Sierra Academy of Expeditionary Learning is a new high school opening the Fall of 2014. SAEL is part of the national school reform model called Expeditionary Learning (EL). Expeditionary Learning was born out of Harvard Education and Outward Bound. EL schools place a strong emphasis on local, project based learning experiences with real world application and relevance. Grass Valley Charter School is one of 18 Mentor Schools within the national network of over 165 EL schools nationwide. GVCS & SYRCL collaborated extremely effectively to prevent the closing of the South Yuba River State Parks when threatened with closure due to California budget cuts.

The vision for this MOU is to define areas of collaboration that are mutually beneficial to both organizations. SYRCL & SAEL share common philosophies and goals relating to environmental stewardship and the important role of education in reaching these outcomes. SYRCL is re-launching a historically successful River Education program and seeking to engage high school age students, while the educational philosophy of SAEL relies upon community engagement for sources supporting fieldwork, visiting experts, adventure, service learning, etc.

Broadly the opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration are in the following areas: Programmatic Goals, Public Relations / Outreach, Grants and Event Support.

Programmatic Goals

- SYRCL currently produces the Wild & Scenic Film Festival for the general public as well as a student session for elementary and middle school grades. SYRCL is interested in expanding this offering to include specially selected programming for high school aged students. SAEL is interested in supporting the creation of this program through collaboration on film selection, feedback, curricular connections, etc.

- SYRCL is looking to refine and expand their River Education program including: assemblies, field experiences, restoration projects, salmon tours, etc. The approach to curriculum design at SAEL creates wonderful opportunities for collaboration in these areas. Students at EL schools are well versed in off site field experiences, thus often are an ideal group to work with while developing programming. The next step is for SYRCL to develop a 12 month calendar with potential opportunities for field experiences, restoration projects, etc – while SAEL develops “Expeditions” aka curricular units of study.
- River Ambassadors is a stewardship program developed by SYRCL wherein young adults, under the guidance of an adult mentor, are boots on the ground stewards of the Yuba River. SAEL’s inclusion of service learning and culminating projects and products make this an ideal opportunity for collaboration.
- Both SYRCL & SAEL are interested in further pursuing the idea of training SAEL students as naturalists for the Fall Salmon Tours. This idea will be developed further as both SYRCL & SAEL move forward with program development.

Public Relations / Outreach


- SYRCL may include outreach information regarding SAEL in their communications including social media (webpage, Facebook, twitter, etc). This will include links to each others web pages via a “Community Partners” page on both organizations websites.

Grants


- Both SYRCL & SAEL may seek out opportunities for mutually beneficial grant opportunities as it relates to funding and program support.

Events

- Both SYRCL & SAEL acknowledge and are committed to developing support for mutual events hosted by either party. Examples of this include but are not limited to, SAEL’s support of the annual Yuba River Cleanup.

 5/8/14

 SYRCL Date

 5/8/14

 SAEL Date