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Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

Dear Educator:

We would like to help educate your students about a major environmental and public health issue now facing California: polluted runoff. The pollution is created when trash and everything else left on the ground is washed or thrown into stormdrains. Unlike the sewer system, where contaminated water flows through treatment plants, stormwater runoff is carried untreated by stormdrains directly into local creeks, rivers, and the ocean. The stormwater pollution is creating unhealthy waterways and growing environmental problems for local communities.

The California Water Boards, local agencies, and others are working hard to reduce polluted runoff and its harmful effects. Public education is one important way to reach that goal, along with cleaning up problem sites, and requiring public and private entities – including school districts – to become more involved in reducing polluted stormwater runoff. To this end, we are asking teachers and students to become involved in helping to restore and protect California's water quality.

The Water Boards are comprised of the State Water Resources Control Board in Sacramento and nine regional water boards throughout the state. The boards serve collectively as the state agency responsible for ensuring the quality of California's water. Toward this end, the Water Boards have developed the enclosed water quality units of study specifically for 4th through 6th grade levels. These instructional tools use the educational process known as "service learning," integrating inquiry-based learning with real-world, hands-on experiences. The lessons aim to improve the water running off of school campuses and from adjacent communities. Called the Water Quality Service Learning Program, the curriculum meets specific grade-level state standards while increasing students' awareness of polluted runoff and how it impacts local waterways and the environment. Of added value, the program was designed to support the Education and the Environment Initiative passed by the California legislature in 2003, a unified strategy to bring education about the environment into California schools.

Additionally, the Water Boards created a Web-based learning tool, featuring an online mentor. Log onto www.waterlessons.org for additional resources and support, including an archived training session.

It is our goal to offer every elementary school student in California the opportunity to learn about local environmental science issues and, more importantly, to take an active role in improving local waterways. Based upon field tests conducted in the Los Angeles Unified School District, we believe our Water Quality Service Learning Program – an unprecedented effort in California – can help achieve that. It is with this hope that we offer you this guide. With your involvement, we can help youth become environmental stewards and ensure cleaner and healthier California waterways for years to come. We can also help promote standards-based learning through a very rich and rewarding student-centered environmental science program.

Sincerely,

Tam M. Doduc, Chair

California Environmental Protection Agency



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