

December 15, 2020

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RE: GCRCD Associate Director Letter of Interest – Mel Sarmiento

My name is (Mel)issa Sarmiento and I am writing to submit a letter of interest for an Associate Director position with Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District (GCRCD). After hearing about this opportunity, I dedicated time to learning more about GCRCD. I appreciated and support the strategic focuses and am confident I would make an excellent addition to your team.

I have been an outdoor/environmental educator for over a decade. Some of this experience includes: developing curriculum as part of a non-profit curricula committee, designing a summer camp program for youth, and leading and training staff on outdoor programming, best practices, and California State Standards. Upon beginning my position, I was tasked with the recruitment of schools, including Deep Engagement Communities, which are defined by the Open Space Authority as places “that experience greater environmental burdens and barriers to access nature.”

One of my passions is diverse and equitable learning experiences for all – my goal is creating an informed and empowered generation of learners who feel confident engaging civically and professionally in the protection of our natural resources. I truly feel that in order to make strides in our field, it is vital to have a diverse team that represents the demographic of our region and those impacted by our decisions. In my current position as Education Program Manager of Guadalupe River Park Conservancy (GRPC), over 78% of our programs are offered to Title-I low-income schools, many of whom are English Language Learners. We also have programs for special needs students which are catered to the groups we attend. As a manager, my goal is to ensure our programs are effective at meeting the academic and executive function development of *all* our students, while building an empathy and connection with the natural world.

In addition to educational experience, I interned for two years as an Assistant Wildlife Biologist studying burrowing owls, specifically. In this volunteer position, I assisted with animal surveys, habitat/foraging area restoration, and grant proposals among many other responsibilities. During this internship, I expanded my knowledge of native species, both flora and fauna, and the integration of these species into natural habitats in order to increase biodiversity. I am a certified California Naturalist, and am currently participating in the first-ever cohort of the California Environmental Educators Certification Program; I expect to be certified at the end of this academic year.

Other experience of value is that my colleague and I led a national webinar regarding homelessness in parks, focusing on the impacts of the housing crisis on our riparian ecosystem. I have several years of event coordination experience in city and county parks, highlighting a variety of environmental themes. In terms of my personality, I consider myself to be an enthusiastic, passionate, authentic, and thoughtful person with a fun sense of humor. Others describe me as organized, detailed, and thorough. I enjoy environments that are positive and productive, and of course, provide learning opportunities for all involved.

I would like to thank you for your time and consideration, as well as the larger influence you have had on my community. I am confident my skills and experience would mesh well with GCRDC’s goals, mission, and board, and hope you consider me to become part of your impactful team.

Most sincerely,
Mel Sarmiento
(she/hers)