



Contact: Sheri Hensley, Public Information Officer
(201) 777-2420 office, (201) 615-8378 cell
sheri.hensley@njmeadowlands.gov

Jeniffer Obando, Ramapo Education Staff
(201) 777-2409 office
jeniffer.obando@njmeadowlands.gov

Brian Aberback, Public Information Officer
(201) 460-4619 office, (201) 615-8570
brian.aberback@njmeadowlands.gov

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MEADOWLANDS ENVIRONMENT CENTER LAUNCHES FIRST EVER BI-LINGUAL SUMMER CAMP

LYNDHURST, NJ – A new twist to a popular summer camp program at The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission’s Meadowlands Environment Center means more children will be able to learn about the unique ecosystem of the Hackensack River. The MEC’s *Hopping Through Habitats* program, which has been in existence for several years, has always been taught in English only. For the first time, it will also be taught in Spanish.

“What better way to embrace and welcome the increasing Latino population of the Meadowlands District, than to offer this popular summer camp in their native tongue,” said NJMC Commissioner James Anzevino. “In my own town of South Hackensack, we are seeing more Spanish-speaking children moving into our Community. It’s only fitting that we do whatever we can to help facilitate their educational opportunities.”

The week-long camp has always been offered twice in the summer to students entering the third and fourth grades. The first session, taught in English, runs July 7-11. The second session, taught in Spanish, is August 4-8. Adding the Spanish-language camp was the idea of Ramapo Educators, who teach the Meadowlands Environment Center Programming. Both sessions will have the same schedule and hands-on lessons, which are as follows:

Salt Marsh Monday – Children are given an introduction to a salt marsh habitat. Using dip-nets, students will interact with live specimens, collecting them for observation. The students will also learn about the salt marsh food chain.

World Habitat Tuesday- This session features a trip to Van Saun Park in Paramus, where the students learn about habitats and why animals live where they do.

Ocean Wednesday- Students perform salinity tests on the Brackish Marsh in an effort compare the salt marsh of the Hackensack River to the ocean. They also compare the three different habitats of saltwater, freshwater, and brackish water by handling specimens of sea urchins, freshwater fish, and toads.

Rainforest Thursday - Students learn what lives in the rainforests of Central and South America, as well as Asia and Africa. Participants learn how trees and seeds found in rainforests are used in the production of products like gum and chocolate. Students are also taught about conversation, and striking a balance between nature's health and meeting human needs.

Forest Friday- Students learn the importance of a forest and will compare it to other habitats studied earlier in the week. One exercise also includes students collecting items such as berries, flowers, branches, leaves and pine cones to make "Earth Art."

All of the MEC's programs are now being held in the brand new NJMC Center for Environmental and Scientific Education in the Richard W. DeKorte Park – the headquarters of the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission. The new 10,000 square foot education center was built to the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design or LEED standards. The Center's features include rooftop solar panels, ceiling solar tubes, recycled building materials and energy efficient heating, lighting and ventilation system. Students who attend programs at the new center will learn by example how the building works to be energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

The cost per student for the week-long camp is \$150. Reporters and photographers are invited to visit either one or both *Hopping Through Habitats* Camps. Please contact Sheri Hensley or Brian Aberback, NJMC Public Information Officers, for more information.

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