



Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

INTERPRETIVE SPECIALIST

CLASS DEFINITION

Under general supervision, coordinates, administers and provides natural and cultural history programming and activities using appropriate interpretive strategies and techniques. Develops and implements new programming, and provides docent (volunteer) training with the Interpretation & Education Program Manager. Continually evaluates program effectiveness, and improves and refines program delivery and training methods to meet docent and community needs. Ensures all programming lies within the framework of professional interpretation best practices, established objectives, budgetary constraints, policies and guidelines. Serves as technical lead, trainer, and day-to-day contact for the District's interpretation docents. The Interpretive Specialist may also work weekends to support or provide weekend program offerings; and performs related work as required.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED

Receives direct or general supervision from the Interpretation & Education Program Manager. Exercises no direct supervision over staff. May provide technical and functional direction over lower-level staff, interns, and/or volunteers.

CLASS CHARACTERISTICS

This is a journey-level classification, which coordinates and administers the District's natural and cultural history interpretation programming. Initially under close supervision, incumbents with interpretation, physical or natural sciences, environmental or conservation experience perform professional and technical work in assigned activities. As experience is gained, assignments become more varied and are performed with greater independence. Work is usually supervised while in progress, and fits an established structure or pattern. Exceptions or changes in procedures are explained in detail, as they arise. This classification is distinguished from the Interpretation & Education Program Manager in that the latter is the professional lead for the District's interpretation and environmental education programs and provides the full range of management oversight and staff supervision for multiple elements of public programming and project development.

EXAMPLES OF ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS (Illustrative Only)

Management reserves the right to add, modify, change or rescind the work assignments of different positions and to make reasonable accommodations so that qualified employees can perform the essential functions of the job.

- Works cooperatively with other District staff and supports coordination staff to ensure all elements of programming are efficient and effective.
- Assists in developing interpretive activities and projects, program goals and objectives, policies, procedures, work standards, and administrative control systems for the Interpretation & Education program.

- Serves as one of several key staff persons and docent liaison for the David C. Daniels Nature Center, with primary focus on support of the facilities interpretive programming and visitor engagement.
- Coordinates recruitment and training of Outdoor Activity Docent (interpretive naturalist volunteers); maintains webpage recruitment elements; performs application intake; tracks applicant process; conducts interviews and selects trainees; provides training and all needed materials.
- Serves as the day-to-day functional supervisor and contact for Outdoor Activity Docents; receives and reviews required online post-program reports from docents; responds to docents regarding program satisfaction; designs and implements recognition activities and events; and ensures docents are kept informed about the District's operations, and their program's priorities.
- Maintains record of docent hours and years of service for program commitment compliance and recognition acknowledgement.
- Monitors program performance; solicits and reviews public feedback on the enjoyment of interpretive activities and the effectiveness of docent interpretive skills; recommends and implements modifications to systems and procedures.
- Maintains required contact (via email, database, or web-interface) with docents, the public, and identified programmatic partners.
- Coordinates quarterly production of Outdoor Activities publication (schedule of docent-led interpretive walks, hikes, rides and other activities and events offered to the public), includes solicitation (web platform) and review of activity proposals from docents, working with contract graphic designer, administering and coordinating web based activity reservation system, and providing effective and ongoing communication with docents and the public as needed.
- Schedules and coordinates quarterly meetings and enrichment presentations in support of docents to maintain their connection to the District; provides updates on District projects and initiatives; and facilitates docent comradery and inclusivity across programs.
- Identifies and implements ways to recruit new Outdoor Activity Docents; and uses professional networks and community resources as available.
- Reviews and updates the docent section of the District's website; works with District web administrator to maintain accurate, timely, and effective interpretation/outdoor activities listings and web engagement for the public; and responds to inquiries from potential docents and the general public.
- Assists with developing and maintaining the District's volunteer handbook and ensuring all Outdoor Activity Docents receive a copy; ensures all docents attend safety and emergency response training as required and are informed about all District policies and procedures related to their work.
- Prepares and maintains accurate and complete records of the work performed; prepares clear and concise reports to monitor the success of assigned programs; creates related written materials as necessary.
- Works collaboratively to plan and implement enrichment activities/trainings, recognition celebrations, and community events.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS

Knowledge of:

- Principles and techniques of interpretation methods to plan, coordinate, deliver, and direct engaging and effective interpretive programming, activities, and projects.
- Working understanding of professional interpretive competencies including though not limited to: interpretive activity development and delivery, interpretive writing, interpretive training and coaching; interpretive media; interpretive plans and projects; and visitor or participant assessment techniques.

- Familiarity with professional organizations and training resources including: National Association for Interpretation; National Park Service – Interpretive Development Program; and proValens Learning and Eppley Institute.
- Inquiry-based natural and cultural history interpretation instruction and training of docents to support their work in engaging the general public in enriched experiences. Best practices for outdoor and/or classroom teaching, and instruction for adult learners.
- California ecology and natural and cultural history; also conservation principles and current environmental challenges (e.g. climate change; equitable access to nature; nature benefits, health and well-being; etc.)
- Principles and practices of docent supervision/volunteer management, including work planning, assignment, review and evaluation, discipline, and recognition.
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office Suite and internet-based software platforms (e.g. Mail Chimp; Survey Monkey; EventBrite; scheduling programs; etc); Record-keeping principles and procedures.
- Practices of researching program and project based issues, evaluating alternatives, making sound recommendations, preparing staff reports or proposals, making presentations.
- Applicable Federal, State, and local laws, regulatory codes, ordinances, and procedures relevant to assigned area of responsibility.
- Techniques for engaging with a variety of individuals from various socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds.
- Basic principles and practices of budget program development, administration, and accountability.
- English usage, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and punctuation.

Ability to:

- Implement relevant and meaningful interpretive experiences that engage a variety of audiences (docents, children, adults) in exploring and investigating the world around them.
- Demonstrate the skills of flexibility and responsiveness to foster a positive, inclusive, and collaborative environment for learning and enjoyment.
- Train, instruct, mentor, motivate, and coach docents; provide appropriate feedback and evaluation.
- Apply key skills to daily work including: effective communication; time management; autonomy; cooperation; prioritization; consultation; leadership, creative problem solving; and delegation.
- Research, analyze, and evaluate new activity and program ideas and delivery methods, procedures, and techniques.
- Use tact, initiative, prudence, and independent judgment within general policy, procedural, and legal guidelines.
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with employees and those contacted in the course of the work.

Education and Experience:

Any combination of training and experience that would provide the required knowledge, skills and abilities is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the required qualifications would be:

Equivalent to graduation from an accredited college or university with major coursework in interpretation, physical or natural sciences, environmental or conservation studies, or a related field; and two (2) years of relevant experience working in a setting or program area that provides interpretive services to the general public (adults and children) or specialized audiences, preferably in an outdoor location - park, recreation area, or open space environment. Bilingual skills, certification as an Interpretive Guide (CIG) or other certification through the National Association for Interpretation, and/or UC California Naturalist certification are highly desirable.

Licenses and Certifications:

- Possession of a valid California Driver's license.
- Possession of, or ability to obtain, Basic First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification within six (6) months of employment.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

Must possess mobility to work in a standard office setting and use standard office equipment, including a computer; to operate a motor vehicle and to visit various preserves, and offsite locations; vision to read printed materials and a computer screen; and hearing and speech to communicate in person, before groups, and over the telephone. This classification is partially sedentary in the office and partially active in the field - hiking/walking is required while conducting programs and trainings. Finger dexterity is needed to use equipment like microscopes, and to access, enter, and retrieve data using a computer keyboard or calculator and to operate other standard office equipment. Persons in this classification occasionally bend, stoop, kneel, reach, push and pull drawers open and closed to retrieve and file information. Persons in this classification occasionally lift, carry, push and pull equipment and supplies weighing up to 50 pounds.

ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENTS

Employees work primarily in an office environment with moderate noise levels, controlled temperature conditions, and no direct exposure to hazardous physical substances. Employees do work in the field and will occasionally be exposed to loud noise levels, cold and hot temperatures, inclement weather conditions, or road hazards. Employees may interact with upset staff and/or public and private representatives in interpreting and enforcing departmental policies and procedures.

WORKING CONDITIONS

May be required to work evenings, weekends, and holidays. Must wear District issued uniform when interacting with the public or as deemed necessary.

EFFECTIVE: August 2019

REVISED: N/A

FLSA: Non-exempt