



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release: March 21, 2018

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Morro Bay Estuary Nature Center Debuts New Science Kiosk, thanks to Grant from Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust

Since 2004, the Morro Bay Estuary Nature Center has been a fixture on the Embarcadero. It is free and open to the public seven days a week, upstairs at 601 Embarcadero on the water's edge. Its wildlife viewing station, live steelhead tank, 3D photo viewer, wildlife mural, and other interactive exhibits make it a great place to stop and learn about what makes Morro Bay so special. The Nature Center even features an interactive touchscreen Science Kiosk. The kiosk content just received a complete overhaul, thanks to a generous grant from the [Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust](#).

With the Miossi Trust's support, Estuary Program staff were able to move the kiosk content online, so that it can be viewed both by visitors the Nature Center as well as virtual visitors to www.learn.mbnep.org. The kiosk content has also been totally revamped, and aligned to the new California State Science standards for middle school students. Estuary Program staff worked with lauded local cinematographer Simo Nylander to create new videos for the kiosk. One video takes viewers on an underwater dive through an eelgrass bed, while another allows watchers to see a full day's tide cycle in about a minute. The kiosk also sports a Morro Bay webcam, which points towards the harbor mouth and takes beautiful shots that include the sandspit, the main navigation channel, and Morro Rock. This Morro Bay Cam page also links to local weather information from the Morro Bay Yacht Club's weather station, just a block away. This will help students in California's central valley and beyond study coastal weather patterns and climate from their classrooms, hundreds of miles away.

Estuary Program staff also worked with local educators and other experts to create content that explores the local effects of climate change, a water usage and conservation calculator, and a video game based on the lifecycle of steelhead trout. The steelhead game, titled Upstream Rush, was created in concert with the Estuary Program by Cal Poly students in Professor Lynne Slivovsky's Computer Engineering

Capstone course. The fast-paced game requires players to swim upstream toward steelhead spawning grounds from the Morro Bay estuary, through the mainstems of the creeks, and into the upper reaches of the tributaries. All along, they have to dodge obstacles that face real steelhead—including sea lions, Sacramento pikeminnow, trash, and water that is too warm.

The [Water Quality page](#) presents information about creek health that Estuary Program staff and volunteers collect each spring, during our bioassessment survey. This survey involves trudging out into local creeks, studying the habitat found there, and collecting samples of bugs that live underwater. The types and quantity of bugs found at each study site help our scientists understand how clean the water is. The page features information about the scientific methods used in the study, as well as closeup photographs of the bugs found at each site. The Miossi Trust has generously funded this bioassessment effort for 5 years, and Estuary Program staff are excited that the science kiosk allows them to share the important insights they've gained as a result.

You can visit the Nature Center in person, seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., upstairs at Marina Square on the Embarcadero (601 Embarcadero, Morro Bay, CA 93402). Admission is free. Or, visit the kiosk virtually from your home or classroom at www.learn.mbnep.org.

In honor of the Science Kiosk's debut, the Estuary Program's annual poetry contest asks students to explore the kiosk content to inspire their free verse poem submissions. Poetry contest submissions are accepted April 1 through 30. Find more information about the Morro Bay Estuary Poetry Contest at www.mbnep.org/poetry2018.

The Morro Bay National Estuary Program brings together citizens, local governments, other nonprofits, agencies, and landowners to protect and restore the Morro Bay estuary. The Estuary Program has been conducting monitoring and research, restoring natural habitats, and educating residents and visitors on how to keep Morro Bay clean and healthy since 1995.