

# CREATING AUTHENTIC NATURE EXPLORATION EXPERIENCES

**ASLA**2022  
DESIGNING A BETTER  
**FUTURE**

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2022

12:30 PM - 5:00 PM

FRI-FS-12

The future of urban health depends on our ability to create authentic nature experiences that restore ecological balance, act as a meaningful 'gateway' nature experience for children and foster community involvement & interaction. We will examine the process involved by exploring new hands-on spaces that have successfully accomplished this.

Unstructured outdoor play isn't just kid's stuff - it is essential for the healthy development of minds and bodies. Experience the growing trend of nature play with us and gather valuable industry insight from new hands-on spaces that activate and encourage our instinctive curiosity about the natural world.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Discover ways that our San Francisco partnerships came together to locally source and repurpose natural materials for play, exploration and ecological restoration.
2. Understand how designed spaces can improve the mental and physical health for all ages and abilities by providing access to nature within their communities, especially in urban environments.
3. Discuss methods to navigate various codes, policies and laws such as ADA and ASTM both locally and nationally in order to provide inclusive authentic nature experiences.
4. Note best practices in community engagement when collaboratively designing nature spaces.





## 1. INTRODUCTION TO NATURE EXPLORATION EXPERIENCES

- 01. Overview and itinerary of field session.
- 02. The importance of connection to nature in public spaces and the growing trends that are becoming apparent with public agencies and educational institutions. *(Stephanie Hansen)*

## 2. HERON'S HEAD NATURE EXPLORATION AREA

- 01. Discover the history, site context and significance of the Park *(Maria Durana)*
- 02. Guided tour: Key Features/Design Development/ Outcomes *(Dave Rexworthy and Maria Durana)*
- 03. The process of virtual collaboration with local community and various contributors and how the prioritizing of local businesses determined the success of the design. *(Dave Rexworthy)*
- 04. Navigating compliance standards in various locales and how to apply ASTM & ADA adherence to authentic nature experiences and ecological restoration projects. *(Stephanie Hansen)*

## 3. WANDER WOODS AT CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

- 01. Review the history of the space and how the need for a nature exploration area at the Academy was determined. *(Donna DiBartolomeo)*
- 02. Guided tour: Key Features/Design Development/ Outcomes
- 03. Site specific strategies of ecological restoration and best practices in creating authentic nature experiences. A focus on the use and appropriation of recycled materials. *(Dave Rexworthy)*
- 04. How designed spaces can improve the mental and physical health of youth by providing access to nature in their communities. *(Stephanie Hansen)*





## HERON'S HEAD NEA

### **Maria Durana**

*San Francisco Recreation & Parks Department*

Maria is the Director of the San Francisco Children & Nature Collaborative and champions the cause of connecting youth to nature through her work with both with the Collaborative and the city Parks Department. Maria was the keystone to community engagement and collaboration with local businesses for the Heron's Head NEA.

### **Jen De Melo**

*Kaboom!*

Jen is the Senior Strategist of Organization Innovation and Strategic Partnerships at KABOOM!, and has committed her career to ensuring that every kid has equitable access to high-quality and safe play opportunities. In her current role, Jen works to provide responsive and innovative program solutions that meet the varying needs of kids and communities. Prior to joining KABOOM!, Jen worked at the Boys and Girls Club in her hometown of Redwood City, CA.

## WANDER WOODS AT CAL ACADEMY

### **Amy Miller**

*California Academy of Sciences*

Amy is the Director of Public Programs and Academy Volunteers and has recently taken over the interim role of the Robert-Wilson Dean of Education.

Amy has led the public programs team for over ten years. Amy currently oversees a team of 25 staff and 400 volunteer educators at the Academy.

This team is responsible for providing programs and activities that reach over 2.2 million guests annually.

### **Donna DiBartolomeo**

*California Academy of Sciences*

Donna is a museum and interdisciplinary education expert with over 20 years' experience in exhibitions, programs, and partnerships. Donna currently serves as the Senior Director of Exhibits at California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. Donna holds a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University and an Ed.M. from Harvard Graduate School of Education.

## BIENENSTOCK NATURAL PLAYGROUNDS

### **Stephanie Hansen, ASLA**

*Senior Designer*

Stephanie is a licensed Landscape Architect at BNP with a diverse background including one of the first SITES Certified projects. Stephanie joined Bienenstock to connect her professional focus with her passion of bringing nature to children.

### **Dave Rexworthy**

*Principal Design / Studio Manager*

Dave is a master of nearly all things Bienenstock; with over 15 years of experience in nature play combined with a background in Architecture,

Dave specializes in creating authentic, real nature play spaces with a variety of natural materials.

