

## Local Girl Scout Juniors earn eco-action badge with help of EID



Left: Troop 831 intently watches as Elizabeth Betancourt points out the mountain ranges, stream beds, and other elements of the watershed. Right: The girls use a spray bottle to simulate rain.

In early March, EID's watershed coordinator **Elizabeth Betancourt** smiled at a troop of ten very curious Girl Scout Juniors as they crowded around a table at a home in El Dorado Hills. The table held a watershed model—a visual and hands-on teaching aid that helps children and adults alike learn more about the workings of our local watershed. The information that Elizabeth provided fulfilled a portion of the requirement for the girls' eco-action badge.

The Scouts attentively watched as Elizabeth spoke about the different areas of a watershed—from mountain ranges, streams, rivers, and lakes to farms and residential areas. “When you look at this model, where do you think all of the water goes?” she asked. Hands shot up and voices shouted “The ocean!” Elizabeth pointed to the area on the model that represented the ocean. Then to emphasize the action of the watershed, she sprinkled red Kool-Aid on the mountain range and gave one of the girls a spray bottle full of water to simulate rain. As the “rain” sprayed down, the Kool-Aid ran into the streams and lakes. “Ooh,” the girls gasped, seeing the watershed in action, “the water is changing color!”

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Elizabeth Betancourt

That was exactly the response Elizabeth expected. She explained to the girls how precipitation can pick up sediment and pollutants as it flows into our rivers and the challenges this presents in treating the water for drinking. She also showed the girls how everyone who uses water—farmers, people at home, golf courses, shopping malls—should be careful about what they put onto the land, because everything from automobile oil drips to soil loosened on hiking trails can eventually end up in the water supply.

“It is important that we all take good care of our land and water,” Elizabeth said. “And if we understand the water cycle and how the watershed works, we know better how to be good stewards. Protecting our valuable water benefits all—from the mountain forests where much of our water supply starts, to the farmlands where we get our food, and to the animals and people that rely on clean water.” ♦