CELP Program Director

Catalina Island Camps

Catalina Island, California

Position Summary

Catalina Island Camps seeks an experienced, enthusiastic, and collaborative CELP Program Director to provide leadership and oversight of the Catalina Environmental Leadership Program (CELP), an environmental and outdoor education program serving school groups in grades 4–12.

Located on the west end of Santa Catalina Island in Southern California, Catalina Island Camps is an organized camp established in 1922 and guided since 1995 by Executive Directors Maria and Tom Horner. In addition to CELP, Catalina Island Camps operates a summer resident camp serving children entering 1st through 10th grade.

The CELP program is part of Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ambassadors of the Environment network of programs.

The CELP Program Director plays a critical leadership role in ensuring that CELP provides safe, engaging, high-quality marine and environmental science education while supporting the development and well-being of students, teachers, chaperones, and staff.

The Program Director has primary responsibility for the day-to-day operation and leadership of the CELP program and works closely with the Chief Operating Officer (COO) on program operations, staffing, safety, scheduling, facilities, and organizational priorities. The position works collaboratively with the Executive Directors, Business Office, and other camp leadership.

The Program Director oversees CELP during its primary school-program seasons, manages and develops the CELP staff team, maintains and evaluates curriculum, supports school relationships and program growth, and coordinates program operations with camp leadership.

The ideal candidate is a confident, highly organized leader who thrives in a camp environment and is committed to youth development, environmental education, outdoor learning, and community building.

To apply, please read the details below then email a cover letter and resume to info@catalinaislandcamps.com.

Essential Responsibilities

Program Leadership & Operations

- Oversee the day-to-day operation of the CELP program during school-program seasons.
- Ensure CELP provides safe, engaging, educational, and high-quality experiences for visiting schools.
- Coordinate daily program schedules, staffing, equipment, supplies, facilities, and program logistics.

- Manage transitions between CELP school-year operations and the summer resident camp season.
- Assist with the planning and operation of weekend groups and guests.
- Support broader Catalina Island Camps operations and organizational initiatives as needed.

Curriculum & Program Development

- Work closely with COO to evaluate and improve CELP's marine and environmental science curriculum.
- Ensure curriculum is current, accurate, engaging, and appropriate for students in grades 4–12.
- Supervise the delivery of educational activities and field experiences.
- Evaluate each program season and use observations, feedback, and other information to improve future programming.
- Develop new lessons, activities, and program offerings as appropriate.
- Maintain high standards for environmental education and outdoor learning.

Leadership & Supervision

- Recruit, interview, hire, train, supervise, schedule, and evaluate CELP Program Staff and Leadership Team members.
- Establish clear expectations, work priorities, and performance standards.
- Foster a positive, collaborative, professional, and service-oriented staff environment.
- Provide coaching, professional development, feedback, and accountability.
- Ensure staff understand and consistently follow camp policies, safety procedures, and program expectations.
- Assist with CELP payroll and Human Resources matters with the COO and Business Office.

School Relations & Program Development

- Develop and maintain positive relationships with schools participating in CELP.
- Coordinate timely contracting, scheduling, and communication with visiting schools.
- Communicate effectively with teachers and adult chaperones to understand and meet school needs.
- Support the continued development and growth of the CELP program.
- Represent CELP professionally to schools, educators, families, and other program partners.

Health, Safety & Risk Management

- Maintain a strong culture of safety throughout all aspects of the CELP program.

- Identify, assess, and respond appropriately to environmental, operational, behavioral, and other risks.
- Ensure staff are prepared to implement emergency procedures and safety protocols.
- Monitor student and staff well-being and respond appropriately to health, behavioral, and other concerns.
- Ensure program practices comply with applicable camp policies and safety standards.
- Exercise sound judgment in changing, challenging, and emergency situations.

Administration & Coordination

- Manage CELP equipment, supplies, and program resources.
- Maintain appropriate program records and documentation.
- Coordinate with camp leadership, the Registrar, Business Office, and other departments.
- Assist with purchasing, scheduling, planning, and other administrative functions.
- Continuously evaluate current season operations and implement improvements for future seasons.

Qualifications

Required

- Bachelor's degree in education, environmental science, marine science, recreation, outdoor education, or related field.
- Minimum three years of progressively responsible leadership experience in organized camps, outdoor education, education, or a related field.
- Previous outdoor education, summer camp, or educational program experience.
- Experience recruiting, hiring, training, supervising, and evaluating staff.
- Strong leadership, organizational, interpersonal, and communication skills.
- Ability to prioritize multiple responsibilities and work effectively in a fast-moving environment.
- Strong problem-solving skills and sound judgment.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Valid driver's license or ability to obtain one.
- Current or ability to obtain First Aid and CPR certification.
- Ability to work independently in a remote island environment.
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office, data management software, and basic workplace technology.

- Willingness and ability to live and work onsite at a camp facility.

Preferred

- Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR) certification.
- Current Lifeguard certification.
- Experience developing environmental, marine science, or outdoor education programs.
- Experience working with school groups, teachers, and adult chaperones.
- Experience developing curriculum or staff training programs.
- Experience working in an outdoor education or camp environment.

Physical Requirements & Working Conditions

- Ability to work outdoors in a rugged, rustic, and remote environment.
- Ability to move throughout the camp property and participate in outdoor educational activities.
- Ability to observe student, adult, and staff behavior and identify environmental, human, and other hazards.
- Ability to respond appropriately to emergency situations and implement safety procedures.
- Ability to work extended hours during active CELP program weeks.
- Availability to participate in the onsite camp community and respond to significant onsite issues as needed.

The Howlands Landing camp site is rugged and rustic, with uneven terrain and other environmental conditions. The physical requirements of the position include regular outdoor activity and mobility throughout the camp site. The site is not currently accessible to individuals who are unable to ambulate independently.

Schedule & Location

This is a full-time, year-round position based primarily at Catalina Island Camps' Howlands Landing facility on Santa Catalina Island.

CELP Program Seasons:
February–May and August–November

During program seasons, the Program Director lives and works onsite at Howlands Landing. CELP operates primarily Monday through Friday and requires long workdays. Weekends are generally off when program schedules permit, although the Program Director is part of the onsite camp community and is expected to maintain appropriate community standards and respond to significant issues as needed. CELP also hosts school and recreational groups on some weekends during the academic year.

Program Breaks:
December/January and June/July

During seasonal breaks, the Program Director's schedule is more flexible and generally follows a Monday–Friday, 9:00 AM–5:00 PM schedule coordinated with the Executive Directors. Responsibilities include seasonal staff recruitment and hiring, school communication, curriculum and program development, program evaluation, planning, administrative work, and preparation for upcoming seasons. During these times, the Program Director can work on the island, remotely, or in the Altadena Business Office.

The Program Director reports to the COO and works closely with the COO and Executive Directors throughout the year. During the program seasons, the Program Director is part of the onsite leadership team at Howlands Landing.

Compensation & Benefits

- Full-time, year-round position.
- Salary range: $72,500–$80,000 annually, depending on experience and qualifications.
- Salaried, exempt position under applicable California wage and hour requirements.
- On-site housing and meals provided.
- Medical and dental insurance.
- Retirement savings plan.
- Paid vacation, sick leave, and holidays.
- Professional development and training opportunities.

About Catalina Island Camps

Catalina Island Camps provides transformative summer camp and outdoor education experiences that foster personal growth, leadership, environmental stewardship, and community.

The CELP Program Director is a key member of the leadership team responsible for maintaining a safe, functional, reliable, and welcoming environment for all campers, students, guests, and staff.

Catalina Island Camps is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity in its workforce. We encourage candidates of all backgrounds who are committed to our mission of youth development, outdoor education, environmental stewardship, and community building to apply.