

## Reaching and teaching: The next generation of environmental stewards

We talk a lot about our restoration efforts, but did you know that environmental education is also a key part of FOSC's mission? Last year FOSC conducted 102 field trips and restoration activities comprising over 1,830 student contacts. Through our youth environmental education program, we get students out of the classroom and into the "laboratory" of their own watershed. Here are just a few of the activities that engage K-12 students in the watershed:



- Restoring biodiversity and mitigating erosion in Dimond Canyon by planting and watering California native plants
- Conducting field skill tutorials on topics like bird monitoring
- Water quality testing from Fern Ravine to the mouth of Sausal Creek and analyzing the data for trends
- Storm drain mural painting with a local Jingletown artist to remind community members that storm drains connect to the creek and the bay
- Benthic macro-invertebrate monitoring for indications of creek health in Dimond Park
- Invasive French broom removal and native plant restoration in Wood Park
- Conducting natural history walking tours through the redwood forest along Fern Ravine Trail in Joaquin Miller Park



Our environmental education program is growing, and FOSC staff are working hard to secure the funding needed to provide free field trips for schools with underserved students. We aim to bring outdoor education to students of all backgrounds and all levels of exposure to nature. To do so, we offer sliding scale, fee-for-service field trips for classrooms that do not qualify for funding under our educational grants.

When students discover the urban wildlands--just walking distance from their neighborhoods--the feeling is magical and the possibilities are endless. Through experiential education, K-12 students learn about and actively participate in hands-on habitat restoration, wildlife observation, and monitoring activities in the watershed and bay shoreline. During their visits, many students experience "ah ha" moments where the connections between people, their neighborhood creek, and the entire bay environment suddenly become more clear. Students witness their own ability to create positive changes through environmental



stewardship right in Oakland. And as they connect with the natural world, they also enjoy the cognitive, physical, and mental health benefits the outdoors affords.

We want to acknowledge and sincerely thank the funders who make this work possible. We completed a three-year grant with the Coastal Conservancy this last June to inspire kids to explore the coast while learning about the waterways that feed and impact it. Through our *Explore Your Creek* program, we have developed strong relationships with schools and provide innovative experiences to help kids see the link between creek, bay, and ocean, even where the creek is buried underground. Our current funders include:

- Bill Graham Memorial Foundation
- The Strong Foundation for Environmental Values
- Hillside Gardeners of Montclair
- East Bay Energy Community
- FOSC community members like you!



Grants are difficult to get, and most are not renewable. Individual donors make all the difference in sustaining the environmental education program. Thank you so much!

*"I shared drawings that were made by the students of that [field trip] day and the amount of details they recalled, from flags for native plants, daylighted sections of the creek, redwoods, and park names; it was clear they were making the connections. They definitely were excited and proud of themselves." - Oakland Teacher*

--Anna Marie Schmidt, Executive Director  
Becca Sanchez, Education and Outreach Coordinator