



FINAL REPORT: **BEAVER DAMS BUILD NEIGHBORHOODS:** *Playing with a Full Deck*

“The sun shines not on us but in us. The rivers flow not past, but through us.”

John Muir

Every beaver festival has its own vibe: some are full almost to the rafters with strangers who barely know the beaver story. Some are so dominated by locals it is practically a reunion. This festival was full of good feeling and beaver believers. Not the MOST people, but the BEST people, and more children than we have seen in recent years. One woman arrived with her suitcase from Chicago after reading about the festival in this month's National Geographic. She has plans to start her own festival next year.



The trading card activity was a huge hit with attendees – such that several young adults tried to slip in as well. More boys than girls wanted to participate for the first time. In all eighty children participated in the card activity. Fifty of those took the post test with an accuracy of 80%. Most of those that got items incorrect were confused by the idea of predators being part of a healthy creek although

everyone knew right away that trash and fishing tackle didn't belong.

This year instead of having children gather cards from exhibits we forced them to trade with other children to obtain a complete set. This meant that they were responsible for identifying every card and knowing what was missing. That made for a more active understanding of beaver pond neighborhoods and when each child returned to the starting booth with their complete set to “*Join the beaver booster pack*” they were smiling and proud. Some children even said they had put the cards in order!

As usual children were eager to show off their knowledge with the post-test. Often parents had to be encouraged to stand back and let their child puzzle out the answer for themselves. Children were very motivated by the chance of winning one of the beaver kit puppets. One of the lucky winners made





sure his answers were understood by righting them out at the bottom of the test. Winning contestants were from Santa Clara and Concord.



Meanwhile the chalk artist completed her compelling design in the middle of the exhibit for all to see. A brother and sister team were allowed to help with some of the lettering. One of the nicest parts about her work is that it makes everyone feel as if they are included as part of the beaver story, with the creek unfolding right at their feet. Several people thanked us for bringing the festival to Martinez and one woman proudly displayed the beaver shirt she had obtained at the very first festival back in 2008.

All in all it was a dam fine day!

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