

Watsonville Wetlands Watch

Annual Report
2016



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends of WWW,

It is an exciting time for Watsonville Wetlands Watch and we are making real and lasting change in creative and innovative ways. Our organization holds strong to a vision of community centered conservation of our natural world that works in concert with its working landscape — where our environment is celebrated as central to community well-being.

Over the past year, we have developed and expanded our Green Careers Summer Institute, where Pajaro Valley youth gain job readiness skills in emerging green careers. We have enriched and invested in our Wetland Stewards program, where high school students teach middle and elementary school students about the importance of the Watsonville wetlands and how they can take action to improve the natural world. We have expanded our citizen science monitoring and student centered restoration projects, while continuing to offer free lectures, tours, and presentations to develop our community's appreciation and understanding of our wetlands and watershed.

We've undertaken ambitious restoration projects that have recreated wetlands and riparian habitat within the historic floodplain of our slough system, restored wildlife corridors and greenbelts, worked to expand and promote bicycle, walking, and hiking trails, developed urban greening projects, climate change adaptation projects, and grown and planted thousands of plants throughout our wetlands.

Thank you for your diverse and meaningful contributions to this work! It takes a community working together to make this type of impact. We couldn't do this without you.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Jonathan Pilch". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jonathan Pilch
Executive Director

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PRESERVATION • RESTORATION • STEWARDSHIP

Working with local, State, and Federal partners to preserve and restore wetlands and natural habitat and ensure the community has diverse opportunities to play a meaningful role in this work.

- This past year we worked with landowners of chronically flooded farming areas within the wetland floodplain to restore native habitat, creating buffer zones against field flooding and restoring wildlife corridors.
- With your help, we planted 15,495 native plants to restore habitat, improve water quality, and provide healthy environments for people and wildlife and grew and sold an additional 1,000 native plants during our annual plant sale resulting in expanding native habitat throughout our community.
- We restored over 27 acres of grassland, wet meadow, and freshwater wetland habitats.
- Working with the City of Watsonville, we continue to restore and maintain over 7 miles of paved trails around the slough system engaging community members during volunteer events that planted native plants along the trails, participated in community bike rides, and assisted with the stewardship.
- We are working to support design and construction of new trails, creating healthy landscapes for individuals, children, and families to walk, bike, run, and just enjoy being in nature.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

EDUCATION

Striving to ensure that every child in the Pajaro Valley has access to hands-on outdoor environmental science and education programs in Watsonville's wetlands that enrich in-class learning and lead to improved educational outcomes.

- Over 2,500 local youth in grades 3 through 12 experienced the wonders of nature and science through educational field trips around the wetlands.
- Guided by our high school mentors and staff, over 400 students participated in our 8-week Wetland Stewards Program exploring the Pajaro Valley's watershed through in-depth activities around water quality, habitat restoration and wildlife.
- 24 new students graduated from our Wetland Stewards Program and Green Careers Summer Institute cohorts bringing the total to 125 future leaders, mentors, teachers, and environmental entrepreneurs that have benefited from the Wetland Stewards and Green Careers programs.
- For the first time this year, we piloted a Wetland Family Engagement Program, encouraging students and their families to continue the exploration and appreciation of local wetlands and trails through a take-home nature activity kit.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Providing the community a way to learn about the Pajaro Valley's diverse wetlands, volunteer, and share their knowledge with others.

- An additional 19 adults completed our annual docent training program and have gone on to assist with field trips and other volunteer projects, bringing the total docent graduates to 219.
- Special events such as World Wetlands Day, Earth Day, International Migratory Bird Day, Native Trails Day, monthly Community Restoration Day, and our annual Habitat Festival and Native Plant Sale provide opportunities to help the environment and have fun while doing it.
- Our bi-monthly lecture series continues to grow hosting specialists presenting diverse topics of interest to our docents, volunteers and community at large.
- Expanded citizen science programs and research projects to understand changes in wetlands and wildlife over time.
- Our volunteers are a committed and dedicated group of individuals who contributed over 8,000 hours of time during 2016.



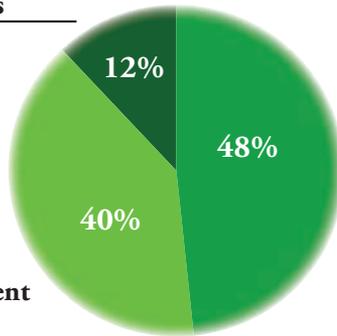
RESOURCES

Our stewardship includes not only the wetlands but the resources entrusted to us by generous donors like you. Thank You!

Funding Sources

Donations

\$94,234



Private Foundations, Organizations, and Businesses

\$385,036

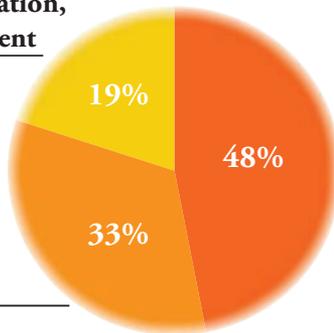
Government Agencies

\$316,077

Expenditures

Administration, Development

\$148,145



Restoration

\$371,657

Education

\$257,827

Want to help make an even greater impact?

Send a check or donate online at watsonvilletwetlandswatch.org

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Executive Director

Jonathan Pilch

We are grateful to our partners the City of Watsonville, Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resource Conservaton Service and many private landowners and growers for their support and meaningful contribution to conservation of the slough system.

Watsonville Wetlands Watch is dedicated to the preservation, restoration, and fostering appreciation of the wetlands of the Pajaro Valley.

Cover photo by Jeff Bleam. Many thanks to Jeff Bleam, Efen Adalem, Denise Murphy, David Dennis, and the dedicated staff and volunteers who contributed the photographs used in this report.

Watsonville Wetlands Watch
831-728-1156
watsonvillewetlandswatch.org



Fitz Education Resource Center
500 Harkins Slough Road
Watsonville, California 95076
P.O. Box 1239
Freedom, California 95019

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