

My First Day

By Craig Breon, Executive Director

My first day on the job was President's Day, February 21st. The staff had a holiday, so Kris Beall, our recently retired executive director, and I had the place to ourselves...but for one rewarding interruption.

A gentle knock on the door revealed a family of four from Los Angeles: husband and wife perhaps in their mid-forties, with identical twin daughters in their late teens. He was a mushroom wholesaler in L.A., and local company Fitz Fresh—owned by Patrick Fitz, a stalwart Wetlands Watch supporter—is one of his suppliers. So the family headed north for a business and pleasure trip, and they heard about our work and our location from Patrick, and thus we made the list of tour stops.

Kris, very fluid as an Executive Director often needs to be, switched from teacher of budgets and procedures to impromptu tour guide. Here was the WERC classroom where students from throughout the Pajaro Valley School District came to look at flora and fauna under microscopes; there was the greenhouse where every Friday a group of volunteers came to propagate native plants; here was our book on the history of Watsonville's sloughs; there was the high school from which our Wetlands Stewards program hires six interns per year to teach in local elementary schools; out there were lands owned by the school and nearby farmers where WWWW staff restored wetlands and grasslands and monitored wildlife and water quality; and up there was a White-tailed kite.



The short tour took perhaps twenty minutes, and given that it was my first day, I learned a lot. The family asked a number of questions throughout: how much land restored, where the money comes from, do we offer bilingual services. At the end of the mini-tour and Q&A, the head of household simply said "I want to thank you for the good work you're doing. This is really important for the families and land of this area. I admire you for taking this on" (paraphrasing).

That's pretty much all I can ask for an introduction to the job. I have a desire to do good work, to be relevant to and a part of the people and land of this area, and to have an occasional mushroom wholesaler acknowledge our accomplishments.

Lots more to come.