
PROJECT S.E.E.

SLOUGH-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

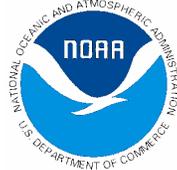
A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER'S CURRICULAR GUIDE TO WETLAND EDUCATION IN THE PAJARO VALLEY AND BEYOND



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Patrick J. Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center



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INTRODUCTION:

Central California's Coastal environs are diverse, unique, and provide habitats for indigenous and migratory wildlife. Among these regions, coastal wetlands afford Californians opportunities to explore wildlife-rich habitats. One such wetland system is located in southern Santa Cruz County within a rich agricultural area of Pajaro Valley. An integral component of the of the Pajaro Valley watershed is a system of six freshwater sloughs that intertwines within a north-western portion the Valley basin and ultimately drains into the Pajaro River (Figure 1). With names recognizing significant farming families such as Harkins, Struve, Gallighan, Hanson and the valley's only city, Watsonville, the sloughs provide a unique resource to the Pajaro Valley communities of Watsonville, Freedom, and Pajaro. As community residents and its visitors walk the City of Watsonville Slough Trail System, they are provided with vistas of Upper Struve and Watsonville Sloughs as these freshwater bodies penetrate City boundaries and mingle with developed suburban city regions.

Nestled within the city's northwestern boundary and surrounded by West Struve, Hanson, and Harkins Slough is a newly formed four-year comprehensive high school of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD), Pajaro Valley High School. Formation of this school forged a partnership with PVUSD, the City of Watsonville and the Watsonville Wetlands Watch (WWW), a local environmental protection organization whose mission is to protect, restore, and promote an appreciation of the wetlands of the Pajaro Valley, especially among members of the Watsonville community and the students of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District.

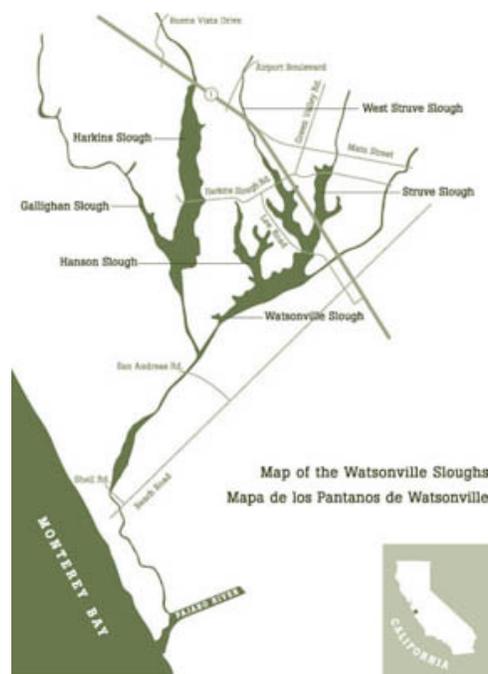


Figure 1: Map of the Watsonville Slough System

This partnership is a collaborative, which, in 2005, resulted in the construction of an environmental education center called the Patrick J. Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center (Fitz WERC) and the designation of 80 acres of Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHAs) on Pajaro Valley High School's campus. The Fitz WERC is staffed by the Watsonville Wetlands Watch and provides PVUSD students and community members opportunities to engage in restoration and education activities that foster wetland stewardship. All three partners share a vision of cultivating a greater sense of belonging and place for Watsonville youth by introducing them to hands-on experiential learning about Watsonville's 800 acres of wetlands.

About Project SEE

Project SEE (Slough-based Environmental Education) began in 2006 and is led by Watsonville Wetlands Watch staff who brought together a cadre of dedicated beginning and veteran teachers to create meaningful hands-on curriculum for high school students. All of the lessons in this guide are inspired by the surrounding Watsonville wetlands and incorporate the ecological, geographical, and cultural elements of the Pajaro Valley. By accessing community resources such as local parks, museums, nature preserves, or other natural resource providers, teachers may use these lessons as models for engaging students in environmental stewardship, or modify these lessons as they develop meaningful experiences for their students that are applicable to their immediate surroundings.

Through participation in Project SEE lessons, students become exposed to principles of wetland stewardship. Over the course of the last two years we have observed that students involved in Project SEE become more engaged in their classes through the hands-on activities which are fundamental to the curriculum. This highly interactive approach to learning provides a real life context for class subjects.

Educators are encouraged to take advantage of the Fitz WERC whose mission is to inspire research, education, and conservation of the wetlands and watersheds of the Pajaro Valley. The center's lending library is loaded with equipment, kits, books, videos and other materials essential for the implementation of these lessons. The Fitz WERC aims to turn the Watsonville wetlands into a living laboratory for the study of science and other disciplines and provide a springboard for young learners to move up to higher levels of education. Please contact our staff or visit our website for more details:

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