



## News from Watsonville Wetlands Watch

### In This Issue

[From Rainwater to Groundwater](#)

[Circumnavigation  
Tour of the Wetlands](#)

[Wetland Steward  
Corner](#)

[Restoration Morning  
at West Marine](#)

[March Community  
Restoration](#)

[Jim Van Houten -  
Thank You for Your  
Service](#)

[Spring Splendor](#)

[WWW Website](#)

[Join Our Mailing List](#)

Editors:  
Jonathan Pilch  
Ria Mukerji  
Debbie Diersch

### From Rainwater to Groundwater



A recently built groundwater recharge basin in the Pajaro Valley

With another dry year, a long-time impacted groundwater aquifer in the Pajaro Valley, and an uncertain future, water conservation measures continue to be important at many levels. One new method that is being developed to improve groundwater infiltration and the re-charge of our aquifers is the creation of groundwater recharge basins that direct and increase the capture of rainwater to replenish the aquifer. This fall we partnered with the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County who is working with the Hydrogeology lab of Andy Fisher at the University of California Santa Cruz and the Pajaro Valley Water Management

Agency to develop and install these important new landscape features throughout the Pajaro Valley.

Watsonville Wetlands Watch staff and the California Conservation Corps supported the project

by installing the sediment and erosion control measures post grading and construction and by designing and installing new native habitat surrounding the recharge basin that would stabilize the site, improve wildlife habitat, and support pollinators and beneficial insects for the surrounding vineyards and farms. The recharge basin will be monitored throughout the coming winter and the years to come to improve the understanding of rainwater infiltration and groundwater recharge while helping to ensure our groundwater resources are here for future generations.

## Circumnavigation Tour of the Watsonville Wetlands

Join Watsonville Wetlands Watch Board Member Bob Culbertson on **Saturday, April 7th**, for a grand tour of the wetlands where you will visit spots rarely seen by the public.

You will discover how this extensive freshwater wetland system fits together, and learn about the history of the area and how it was conserved. Not only will Bob show you parts of the slough system seldom seen by the public, but you will also be able to do a little bird watching along the way. Bob is a retired Superintendent of State Parks in Santa Cruz County and offers a deep wealth of information about our slough system.



This tour will take place rain or shine. Wear layered clothing and bring a hat and umbrella in case of rain.

**Saturday April 7th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** Meet at the Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center at the top of the Pajaro Valley High School campus located at 500 Harkins Slough Road, Watsonville.

Space is limited so reserve your spot early by going to [www.watsonvillewetlandswatch.org](http://www.watsonvillewetlandswatch.org) and click on "Events".

## Wetland Steward Corner





Wetland Stewards Lucia, Andres, and Eustolia

Every month we bring you bios on our 12 Wetland Stewards so you can get to know this inspiring young bunch of students. This month we are introducing Lucia, Andres, and Eustolia.

**Lucia** had friends who had participated in Wetland Stewards and upon seeing what good experiences they had, wanted to be a part of the program herself. She also developed a love of the environment in her AP Environmental Science class. Her favorite memory as a Wetland Steward is the camping trip over the summer at Manresa Beach, as it was her first time camping! In college she hopes to study either Marine Biology or Environmental Studies and is grateful for the confidence and public speaking skills she has gained from being a part of Wetland Stewards.

**Andres** was inspired to join Wetland Stewards after attending one of our Project Tierra field trips through Mr. Martindale's chemistry class and was encouraged to join by his brother, an alumni of the program. He is interested in film and music production and had an opportunity to take video footage of the wetlands and help edit footage for the WAVES program, which is a forthcoming trail app that the public will be able to utilize currently under development by the Monterey Bay Center for Environmental Literacy.

**Eustolia** was encouraged to join Wetland Stewards by her biology teacher. She has a passion for mentoring younger students and loves to see how inspired the kids that come on field trips get. She feels that she can see them developing a love for the Earth and wants to show them that they have the ability to make a difference even at a young age. After graduating, she hopes to become a culinary nutritionist and is grateful to the Wetland Stewards program for giving her an appreciation for community engagement.

*Please be sure to say hi to these remarkable young people when you see them at the WERC.*

## Restoration Morning at West Marine





Volunteers from West Marine work hard on the trail

On February 14th, we were joined by employees of West Marine to complete a restoration project on one of the City of Watsonville trails. About 20 of their employees joined us for a morning of weeding, clearing and other restoration work along Struve Slough.

Many of the employees of businesses in the Westridge Business Park use the City trails during their lunch breaks and oftentimes are left wondering about the plants and animals that live along the trail. The West Marine employees were thrilled to get a short guided walk while they traveled to their restoration site as they were able to get information on the Wetlands Watch and about the birds, flora and fauna they see every day. We are excited for them to be able to serve as stewards along the trail, informing people about the importance of the trail system while they benefit from its beauty.

**Does your business want to volunteer with us too?** Contact Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator Ria Mukerji for more details about volunteering with your employer at 909-680-9872 or [ria@watsonvillewetlandswatch.org](mailto:ria@watsonvillewetlandswatch.org).

## March Community Restoration



Volunteers along Struve Slough

Join us on **Saturday March 24th** for our monthly community restoration day at the Watsonville Slough Ecological Reserve (more commonly known as the 'DFW' for those familiar with our work.) The native planting is part of a long-term climate adaptation project looking at salinity, plant and bird populations in West Branch Struve Slough.

You don't have to be a scientist or field biologist to help! Come join the Wetlands Watch and be a part of this project. We will work from 9:00 a.m. to noon (with breaks for birding!). We supply the gloves,

tools, and a snack. Meet at our Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center located at the top of the Pajaro Valley High School.

If you have questions, please contact Ria Mukerji at [ria@watsonvillewetlands.org](mailto:ria@watsonvillewetlands.org) or (909) 680-9872.

## Jim Van Houten - Thank You for Your Service



WERC groundbreakers (from left to right) Dobie Jenkins, Chris Johnson-Lyons, Bob Culbertson, Nancy Lockwood, Bob Geyer, Patricia McQuade, and Jim Van Houten

After more than two decades of service to the Watsonville Wetlands Watch, Jim Van Houten is stepping-down from the Board of Directors. Jim started volunteering in the early 1990's and has been a major driver in the development of this organization and the wetlands of the Pajaro Valley ever since.

Jim helped to get Watsonville Wetlands Watch incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1999, developed the Planning and Conservation committee, which he chaired for many years, was instrumental in the establishment and development of the Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center, even personally overseeing the construction of the greenhouse, was instrumental in the acquisition of the Tarplant Hill property - which to this day is the only permanently protected nature preserve within the City.

Other major accomplishments included helping to negotiate the Pajaro Valley High School conditions for approval, serving as chair of LAFCO for the Manabe-Bergstrom annexation which resulted in significant restoration of Watsonville Slough and a complex and effective specific plan for that property, he was a driving force in getting the Watsonville Slough System Water

Resources Management Plan and the Slough System Conservation and Enhancement Plan developed, which have guided and continue to guide environmental improvements throughout the slough system and organized the Watsonville Slough System Stewardship Committee for many years.

Chris Johnson-Lyons, Board of Directors President, stated: "Jim is a Jack of all Trades and a Master of All. His legacy of numerous and diverse accomplishments to the work of Watsonville Wetlands Watch has been phenomenal. He has been a fearless fighter for the Pajaro Valley natural environment with remarkable success."

It is fair to say that the Watsonville Wetlands Watch, the system of wetlands we protect, and our entire community in South Santa Cruz County would not be where we are today without Jim's positive driving force and his true professionalism and personality that helped to build consensus and advance key initiatives.

*Please join us in thanking Jim for all of his years of service and awe-inspiring accomplishments.*

## Spring Splendor

*"Came the spring with all its splendor,  
all its birds and all its blossoms.  
All its flowers and leaves and grasses."  
- William Wordsworth Longfellow*



California native Ceanothus in full bloom

Spring is almost here! Celebrate the changing of the season on March 20th when the spring equinox takes place. Imagine how beautiful and lush it will be as the flowers bloom, the grasses grow, the trees leaf-out, and the birds sing.

As the days get longer, sunnier and warmer, it will be a great time to get out into the wetlands for a nature walk, a bike ride, and bird watching. Take advantage of the miles of easily accessible trails meandering along the slough system and take in the magnificent water vistas.

The trail systems along the Watsonville Wetlands were built for our enjoyment by the City of Watsonville and are restored and maintained by the Watsonville Wetlands Watch in partnership with the City. Maps of the wetlands and trails are available at the Fitz Wetlands Education Resource Center located at the top of the Pajaro Valley High School.

So don't wait! Enjoy the splendor of spring with family and friends and enjoy the outdoors together on the trails along the Watsonville Wetlands.

Here is a fun fact about the native plant pictured above. Ceanothus L. is a genus of about 50-60 species of nitrogen-fixing shrubs or small trees in the family Rhamnaceae. Common names for members of this genus are California lilac, wild lilac, and soap bush. They are evergreen and very drought tolerant. "Ceanothus" comes from a Greek word meaning "spiny plant".

If you would like to support the Watsonville Wetlands Watch mission of protecting, restoring, and fostering appreciation of the wetlands of the Pajaro Valley, [click here](#).

***Thank You!***

Watsonville Wetlands Watch advocates for wetland issues, educates elementary, middle, and high school students, restores degraded habitats, preserves what remains whole, and teaches appreciation for the unique beauty and life of the Pajaro Valley wetlands. In cooperation with numerous other agencies, we support studies of and planning for these sites.

Watsonville Wetlands Watch is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, federal tax i.d. #77-0519882.