

Rancher Trades Boots With Fish and Wildlife Service Official

Stacy Davies, ranch manager of Roaring Springs Ranch in Frenchglen, Ore., spent a week in Washington, D.C., working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as part of the “Walk a Mile in My Boots” exchange program between USFWS and the National Cattlemen’s Foundation (NCF).

Davies worked alongside USFWS Assistant Director of Endangered Species Bryan Arroyo, who recently spent time working with Davies at Roaring Springs Ranch. The two men spent three days each experiencing the profession of the other to build better understanding and appreciation of the role farmers and ranchers and USFWS personnel play in protecting the environment.

During the week of July 21, Arroyo worked alongside ranch manager Davies and his crew learning about ranching in the West and how Davies manages a 1-million-acre ranch to enhance wildlife habitat while maintaining a profitable cattle operation.

“This has provided me with an opportunity to see how science is driving


management decisions on the ranch as it does with the work in our agency,” Arroyo said. “Walk a Mile should be incorporated in our training of new employees. It is an extraordinary experience for both ranchers and federal employees.”

In completing the reciprocal exchange, Davies met with legislators about a variety of conservation issues, talked with staff at the Service’s national headquarters about ranching and wildlife, and observed the daily operations of the nation’s principal fish and wildlife conservation agency.

“It has been a privilege to work alongside Mr. Arroyo and understand the complexities of the Fish and Wildlife Service on a national level,” Davies said. “I hope I helped build better understanding of the importance of the cattle industry as one of our nation’s key food providers and the work we do in implementing environmental practices.”

During a meeting with USFWS Director Dale Hall during his Washington visit, Davies said, “We’re in the business of turning grass into a finished product — beef. We fully

believe that a healthy environment and economy work together and that they are absolutely co-dependent. You have to manage both, and we’ve seen a rewarding shift in the working relationship between ranchers and the fish and wildlife employees.”

The “Walk a Mile in My Boots” program was originally developed as a partnership between USFWS and the NCF. In recent years the partnership has expanded to include the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the National Association of Conservation Districts. More than 50 exchanges have taken place between ranchers and the various federal agency employees. Each person has walked away with a greater respect and understanding of the challenges each party faces in the decisions they make. 

Editor’s Note: For more information about the NCF, which supplied this article, visit www.nationalcattlemensfoundation.org. For more information on USFWS, visit www.fws.gov.