



## **A Few Words About “Vigilance.”**

For Chico First, “vigilance” is connected to the concept of a vigil, or watching-over. We watch over each other, and spaces we care about.

For example: last weekend, at the request of a downtown homeowner who worried that large amounts of toxic garbage yards away from her house would wash downstream, we showed up and cleaned an illegal camping area that had been given appropriate notice by the ranger. We hauled buried batteries, needles, ad hoc meth pipes, soaked, muddy rugs, alcohol bottles, styrofoam containers, junk food wrappers, plastic bottles, high-end bike parts, discarded clothing, waterlogged furniture, torn tarps, a shopping cart, innumerable cigarette butts and plastic discarded items, toilet paper and human leavings out of the creek area so that it would not poison the rising water. We urged nearby neighbors who came out to thank us to let us know if they see discarded garbage piling up again.

Sadly, we were told that the same kind of mess started piling up again almost immediately after we had left. So, we’ll go back this weekend. And we’ll clean it again if we need to. Because if we don’t look after the places we care about and just allow them to be repeatedly abused with discarded waste and drug activity that is toxic to wildlife and dangerous to kids and pets, we are part of the problem. This is vigilance.

When we ask you to help us be vigilant, we are asking you to show awareness of and care for your surroundings and for Chico. Yes, part of this is also registering your bike, and locking your car doors at night, and closing your garages against theft, installing home security systems, and connecting with your neighbors to help keep each other, your kids, pets, and property safe.

What vigilance doesn’t mean, and has never meant to us: disrespecting or mistreating people. For example, we often encounter campers when we are on cleanups. We are always courteous. If they don’t wish to engage, we leave them be. We never touch areas that have not been given timely notice by a ranger, and any item someone says they want, they keep. We carry 2-1-1 local service cards to hand out, and let people know about what help is available. Oftentimes people say they were unaware of local services before they spoke to us. We always treat people gently and with respect. If we ever have a concern, we call a ranger or law enforcement. This is one of the reasons that the rangers and local law enforcement trust us and work with us.

It has been said that vigilance is the price of liberty. Vigilance is also the price of a clean, safe and beautiful hometown.