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Bidwell Park Pulse

2015 Annual Report Edition

This edition of the Pulse summarizes the Parks Division progress made in Bidwell Park and other areas of Chico. For additional details, refer to the annual report presented to the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission .

This year marked another year of significant challenges to the Parks, Open Spaces, Greenways, and Preserves Division (Park Division) and the Street Trees and Public Plantings Division (Street Trees).

Staffing cuts initiated in 2013 continues to cast a shadow on its consequences to services. The combined staffing levels for both divisions is at half of what was available in 2009. In addition, the Urban Forest Manager (UFM) position remains unfilled. The diminished capacity has meant a backlog in maintenance and reduced Park hours. For example, the number of Street Tree service requests climbed from less than 200 in 2013 to nearly 1,000 at the end of 2015.

While the focus continues toward providing basic and emergency services, we developed creative solutions to handle workload and redefined staff responsibilities. Stability has allowed the City to build capacity in certain areas (tree contracts and new partnerships) with and to take on new endeavors (a more comprehensive fundraising strategy raised over $20,000 for Caper Acres).

To kick off the New Year, we reflect on last year's accomplishments and lay out new approaches to tackle upcoming issues. The Parks Division and Street Trees Division are pleased to share this annual report to the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission and the public. The objective of this document is to provide transparency to the public and report on performance of the Divisions.

As citizens, commissioners, and staff we have much work to do and we will continue to build better partnerships and ways to do things every day. We look forward to working with the community toward solutions in 2016!

~Daniel Efseaff, Park and Natural Resource Manager

Parks Division

- Administrative and Visitor Services
- Maintenance Crew
- Ranger/Lifeguard
- Volunteer Program
- Natural Resource Management
- Outreach and Education

Street Trees and Landscapes

- Street Trees
- Public Landscapes

Support your Park through the North Valley Community Foundation!!!

http://nvcf.org/fund/bidwell-park-chico-parks-division-2/

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The Bidwell Park Pulse

The Bidwell Park Pulse is a quarterly newsletter of the City of Chico's Parks, Open Spaces, Greenways, and Preserves Division. The Parks Division is part of the Public Works Department, and is responsible for maintaining and operating City parks, open space, and recreation areas including Bidwell Park, Children's Playground, Depot Park, City Plaza, Lindo Channel, Little Chico Creek Greenway, Teichert Ponds, and other preserves. Parks Division programs include: Maintenance, Ranger, Lifeguard, and Volunteer Programs.

City of Chico Mission

To protect and enhance our community's quality of life for present and future generations.

Bidwell Park and Playground Commission (BPPC)

The BPPC is vested with the supervision, control and management of many public parks and playgrounds within the City. **Commissioners:** Mary Brentwood, Marisa Corley, Alberto Hernandez, Jim Moravec (Chair), Valerie Reddemann, Janine Rood, and Drew Traulsen. **Staff Liaison**: Shane Romain

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About the Banner Photograph: Cedar Grove is a popular group picnic site.

2015 Highlights:

Administrative and Visitor Services

Our efforts in customer and visitor services are an important part of providing citizens with a good experience in the park and community.

Functions: *reservations, permits, support and analysis for Commission meetings, development and management of budgets, vendor payments and contracts, and customer and visitor services.*

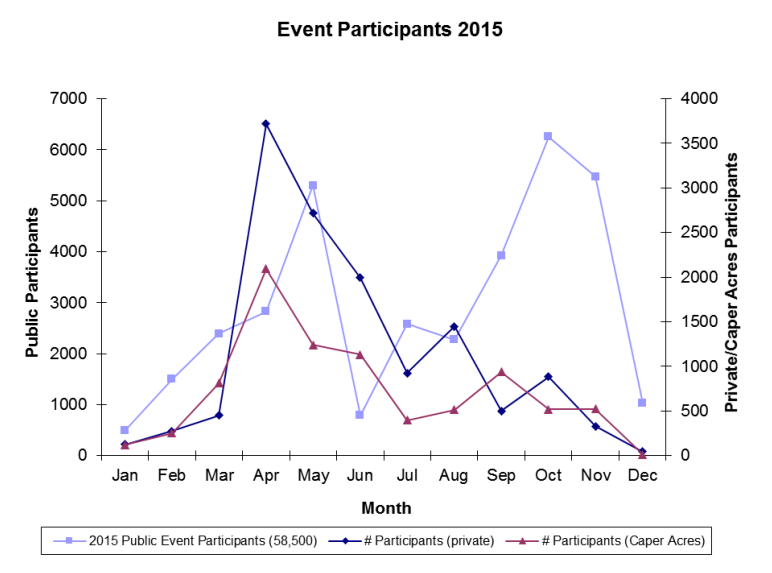
Hours – Gate hours reverted to pre-2013 hours. With the last budget, the Council partially restored 0.25 FTE for park rangers. To allow for minimal staffing to service the restrooms and to aid with the maintenance backlog, Staff will recommend the addition of 1.5 FTE for maintenance staff for the 2016-2017 budget. Staff will seek additional resources for the tree program as well and potentially develop a seasonal staffing model with Parks.

Capital Projects Request - Staff submitted capital project requests to address long-long-term replacement issues. Items submitted include: Upper Park Road (plan and repair), Park Facility Improvements (funds to rehabilitate, repair, and install facilities on City properties such as benches, picnic tables, building improvements, minor bridge and paved path repairs; bringing electrical up to code; irrigation repairs; gate and fence replacement and installation; Par Course features; ADA repairs; and others), Corridor Tree Improvements (for planting, proactive structural and formative pruning, tree protection, and irrigation).

Service Requests – Perhaps the most notable observation from the number of service requests is related to street trees. Staff closed over a 600 requests, which still left over 400 open.

BPPC Support – Staff supported 10 BPPC meetings, and 2 Natural Resource Committee meetings.

Park Permits - Staff tracked the number of permits and participants for both public and private events, including Caper Acres . Staff issued a total of 551 permits. Total public event participation was 55,657, slightly down from 2014 (58,500) . In 2012, the estimate was 81,472. The estimates do not include spectators, which could increase the numbers significantly.



Over 55,000 people enjoy events at City facilities.

2015 Totals				
	Status			
Division	Open	Closed	Total	% O/C
Illegal Encampment	16	180	196	9%
Park Rangers	1	6	7	17%
Parks	29	150	179	19%
Trees/Public Landscapes	447	664	1111	67%
Total	**493**	**1000**	**1493**	**49%**

Service Requests in 2015

2015 Highlights:

Park Ranger Program

Functions: *protect park resources and educate the community; patrol the City parks and greenways; enforce rules and laws; emergency response; visitor assistance; report damage and safety concerns; event coordination; illegal encampments; conduct educational and interpretive programs; monitor; assist with natural resource management task; open/close park gates and facilities; assist prescribed burns and vegetation management projects.*

The year focused on developing new staff and intense attention on homeless issues in parks and greenways. While difficult to capture all the activities of 2015, some highlights below provide a sense of the year:

Staffing changes - 2015 ushered in a change of faces and roles in the ranger program : Ranger Lisa Barge became the Senior Ranger. Hourly Matt Sandquist, helped fill the void for 5 months with his strong law enforcement/safety background, while Ranger Barge trained new Rangers Daniel Hiemstra and James LeDonne.

Security - AG Security took on night closures of the park, so Rangers could focus on peak hours, increasing shift overlap and safety for rangers.

Coordination - Officers worked in tandem with rangers on early morning sweeps and to enforce the new defenses of waterways ordinance.

Homeless Encampments – Rangers continue to supervise cleanups monthly throughout the City. City staff collected in excess of 400 cubic yards of trash throughout the year from encampments. These activities accounts for 60% of Ranger time.

Lifeguards - the City contracted with the Chico Area Recreation District (CARD) to provide lifeguards. Attendance at the pool over 76 guard days for the 2015 summer season was 22,625. Staff hours for the pool were 5349.65.

Community outreach and education - Rangers promote an understanding of resource protection, stewardship, park history and safety. Rangers were involved in a number of interpretive opportunities (e.g. Endangered Species Faire, Snow Goose Festival, Elks Allied Agency Safety Faire, Walmart Safety Faire the Bidwell Bark) and led bike rides and various school field trips.

The Butte County Sherriff's Office Alternative Custody Supervision (ACS) and Sheriff's Work Alternative Programs (SWAP) - cleaned up homeless encampments, provided park maintenance and cleaning of Caper Acres and One Mile and invasive plant removal and replanting with supervision of park maintenance staff.

Animal issues – Several bats were taken to the county health department that tested positive for rabies, and Rangers educated the public about bats. An individual in Upper Park was exposed to a fox's saliva and received treatment for the disease.

Dog leash issues and voluntary owner compliance continues as an issue. Staff will be looking at other cities and programs for ideas on the issue.

City Accident/Damage/Theft Reports - Citizen filed reports for 2015 showed vehicle burglaries or smash and grabs as the number one crime incident in the park followed by bike thefts.

Rangers Romain and Barge encourage park stewardship, leadership and share the ranger profession.

Outreach and Education

The Parks Division's Facebook page (City of Chico—Parks Division) - over 600 followers.

Picnic in the Plaza (PiP) – The Parks Division teamed up with the Downtown Business Association (DCBA) to offer a series of weekly events. The PiPs successfully increased positive activity in the City Plaza.

Bidwell Park 110th Birthday Bash – The Bash provided live music, and kid friendly games. The day finished with the movie, "The Wizard of Oz" at the Sycamore Field. The event served as a fundraiser for the park and brought attention to efforts to renovate Caper Acres.

News Releases - 22 released on upcoming management efforts and volunteer opportunities as well as education on park resources.

(Background Photo Courtesy of Abram House Photography)

2015 Highlights:

Urban Forest

Urban Forest: *The Division cares for over 36,000 trees planted in the Public Right of Way and other city-owned areas (excluding natural areas such as Bidwell Park and Greenways).*

Tree City USA– The Arbor Day Foundation recertified Chico as a Tree City USA recipient (31st year). The program provides a framework for community forestry management for cities and towns across America.

Monitoring – Staff completed a report on the drought impacts and identified a standard for converting parkway strips to a drought tolerant landscape.

Tree Staff – Limited staff and budget restricts the services that it provides (for example with only 1 full time STMW, he is limited to working from ground level (OSHA requirements); however, staff have used other techniques (pole saws and throw lines) to extend access from ground level.

Staff saved this Black Walnut tree near Enloe Hospital through selective root pruning and rerouting curb and gutter during construction.

City staff and Chico High School students planted new trees along the Esplanade for Arbor Day.

Permits - With the decrease in staff, property owners have increased the number of permits to pay for tree services to perform maintenance on City Street Trees. The number rose from 28 in 2013, to 66 in 2014, to 122 in 2015. The increase has added to the workload to process the applications and for field inspections.

Tree Contracts – the City has added several contracts (Emergency services, Routine Pruning and Planting, Removal for dead, dying, dangerous trees).

Urban Forest Manager – The position will be re-bid. If a suitable contractor is not found the position will be filled thru the regular recruitment process. This position has been vacant since July 2013.

PG&E donation – PG&E donated $20K to plant approximately 52 trees in 2016. Staff will report on the progress of the project in the next annual report. Salvation Army Planting - The Salvation Army provided funds and a group from Chico State planted 40 trees.

Tracking – Staff developed a new system to simplify tracking and provides an accountable means for the public to track progress. (see full report).

2015 Highlights:

City Landscapes

Water Conservation - The city currently has 218 water meters. The City continued strict water conservation practices and reduced water use by 30.6% (a savings of $16,772) for months June through October in comparison to 2012. In addition, the City stayed below the mandatory water budget. In the long-term, the City will look to convert to drought tolerant uses.

Adoption of Landscape parkway conversion guidelines and Urgency Ordinance - Chico's City Council approved the adoption of landscape parkway conversion guidelines to allow the conversion to low -water use plants and installing water efficient irrigation systems.

Landscapes: *The program oversees the City's City Specialty and Neighborhood Parks, Municipal buildings, Parking/ Transportation facilities, and Public Plantings.*

Clean Water Act Permit Compliance - The City prepared a Landscape Design and Maintenance Program to reduce the amount of water, pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers used during operations.

Service requests - The City responded to 210 service requests and 714 email requests related to city landscape issues (such as irrigation issues, hazards, repair of fences, sound-walls, quality control, tree inspection, review and inspect new landscape design installations, identify and locate landscape utilities and consult on landscape projects.

2015 Highlights:

Volunteers & Donations

Volunteer Program Mission: *enlist the help of the local community in managing Park resources and expand volunteerism in as many aspects of enhancing Bidwell Park as possible (Bidwell Park Volunteer Manual, April 2007)*

Total Volunteer Hours – is a remarkable 24,633 which using the current rate for the State of California of $24.75 per hour, the Park's total volunteer hours of 24,663 is equivalent to $610,409.25.

Park Watch - Members serve as ambassadors to the park and provide information and advise park staff about damage, hazards, vandalism, or other concerns. Approximately 18 new members were added in 2015, bring the active total to 125.

Events – Major volunteer events such as Earth Day, Make a Difference Day, Cats in the Community, and Upward Bound continue to be very successful and popular. 2015's Make a Difference Day had a huge positive impact on the appearance of South 1 Mile in particular.

Weekly Volunteer Workdays – Volunteer Saturdays focused on the South 1 Mile area. Volunteer Saturdays were especially popular with CAVE students.

Crew Leader Program – Volunteer leaders increased the number of weekly sessions. Crew Leaders lead volunteer sessions, document worksite progress and report volunteer hours.

Over 100 Volunteers gathered for Make a Difference Day 2015

Active Volunteer Crew Leaders:
Elaine Ellsmore, Elizabeth Stewart, Janet Ellner, Michael Bruhn, Steve Overlock, Susan Mason, and Timmarie Hamill.

Donation Program— The donation program provides critical support for interns, habitat restoration work and materials, invasive plant removal, and infrastructure.

Organization	Description	Amount
Alliance for Workforce Development	Fire Fuels Reduction throughout City Parks and Greenways	$150,480.00
Sheriff's Alternative Custody Supervision	Park Maintenance, Illegal Encampment Removal	$23,760.00
	Total	$174,240.00

Event or Specific Donor	Amount
Bidwell Bash	$1,200.00
Annie B's Community Fund Drive	$20,700.00
Caper Acres Winter Gala	$5,426.00
Total	$27,326.00

Arbor Day tree planting at CSU Chico.

Buy an insulated Caper Acres Klean Kanteen from the Park Division for $25!

Planning and Monitoring Highlights

- *Completed 2014 Peregrine Point Monitoring Report .*
- *The Natural Resource Committee (NRC) reviewed initial trail priorities for Bidwell Park. The staffing of the Urban Forest Manager functions will allow Parks staff the capacity to return to these items at the NRC.*
- *Adoption of the Caper Acres Renovation Plan.*
- *Staff provided options to Council on Bidwell Ranch. Council decided to wait until Butte County's Habitat Conservation Plan moves forward before selecting a direction for the property.*

(Background Photo: Young volunteers receive a safety briefing before going to work in the Park)

2015 Highlights:

Maintenance and Infrastructure

Maintenance Mission: *Park maintenance is responsible for the care and maintenance of Bidwell Park and other assigned parks, view sheds and greenways.*

Staff was very creative in handling crumbling infrastructure with minimal resources and staffing. Degraded infrastructure is quite apparent at City facilities, from the decomposing deck on the Ceres Street bicycle bridge to the holes and cracks on the paved bike paths and South Park and Petersen Drives. Vandalism also took a toll. For example, early 2015 started with fence rail breakage at all our parking lots, break-ins and attempted break in to the One Mile Concession Stand and restrooms (2), and the Five Mile and Cedar grove maintenance rooms.

Given all the challenges this year, staff still managed to a number of accomplishments: new bathroom fixtures at 3 restrooms including waterless urinals and replacement hand dryers, several hundred feet of replacement fencing, repaired three gates, complete re-build of the horse shoe pits, safety trimming of vegetation, and the replacement of deck planks on the Ceres street bicycle bridge (as the budget allows), 5 trail kiosks, repairs to the One Mile swings, installation of of LED lights throughout Lower Park, and adding a timer to the shower at North One Mile to control water usage and hours.

Caper Acres Repairs and Improvements: Retro-fitted the bird cage play structure, removed the Bunker Hill mine complex. For the first time in several years, Caper Acres does not have caution tape closing dangerous features.

Trail Program –Staff in conjunction with Chico Velo volunteers and the California Conservation Corps completed over 230 feet of stone work and trail bed hardening on the Monkey Face trail. Chico Velo and staff completed the last section of the trail grant connecting lot E to the Middle Trail. The most erosive prone 1,412 foot section of the Annie B trail received major corrections and trail bed hardening by the California Conservation Corps, Chico Velo Volunteers and city park staff. This was the first major trail work on the South side of the Park in several years.

Native Plantings - Park staff created new planting sites and reworked several of the older ones. The changes in some of the older sites (fifth or sixth season) are remarkable and we receive many compliments about the changes. Additional restoration work planned for this year, will help oak trees in the One and Five Mile lawns and save water.

Staff worked with different service groups, volunteers, and contractors to accomplish the repair to Sycamore pool, the surround and chips for the One Mile swings, the clearing and seeding of Comanche Creek Greenway, and various trail work projects in Upper Park.

Sycamore Pool repair: Staff working closely with our contractor managed to complete some much needed repairs to the pool, such as the new sump box for cleaning out the pool, many big repairs to the bottom, buttresses for one section of the wall and adding ballast rock at the top end to help prevent erosion of the pre pool bank.

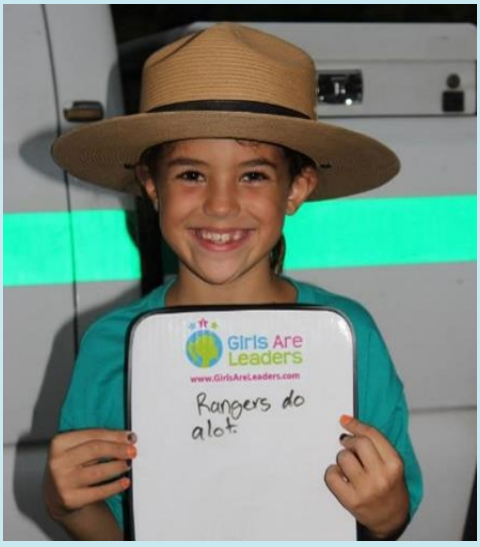
Re-surfacing parking lot B in Middle park.

Council approved funding to prevent the collapse of this wall at Sycamore pool .

(Background: Parking Lot D – split rail installation to protect Blue Oaks.)

Staff make final touches before opening the Birdcage play structure after extensive repairs.

New valut is installed at Sycamore Pool. The extensive erosion around the sides threatened the structural integrity of the pool floor.



Buy a Jake Early T-shirt from the Park Division—$25!

__ Yes, I would like to help Bidwell Park & City Greenways!

I understand that my contribution is tax deductible (IRS Publication 526 (2012) p. 2).

- ☐ Caper Acres (99170)
- ☐ Trails (99174)
- ☐ General Donation
- ☐ Park Intern (99173)
- ☐ Park Improvements (99171),
- ☐ Park Infrastructure (99172)
- ☐ Vegetation Management (99175)

Name_____
Address_____
City_____ State ___ Zip_____

Enclosed please find my support in the amount of: $ _____

☐ My check is attached (Please make payable to Chico Parks Division)

☐ Please bill my credit Card ($20.00 minimum)

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Card # : _____ Exp._____

Please clip and return to City of Chico/Parks Division/Donations/965 Fir Street/ Chico, CA 95926.

For official use only 050-000-46001/_____-000-3990

Parks Division

411 Main Street | PO Box 3420

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View the Annual Report Online, please visit:

http://www.ci.chico.ca.us/document_library/documents/2015_Annual_Report_15_0123.pdf

Annual Staffing and Budget Comparisons

Category	FY 2007-2008	FY 2010-2011	FY 2011-2012	FY 2012-2013 (actuals)	FY 2013-2014 (actuals)	FY 2014-2015 (adopted)	FY 2015-2016 (adopted)	Trend (2007 to present)
Operating Budget								
Park Division	$1,799,037	$1,848,137	$1,817,833	$1,905,735	$1,632,784	$1,747,032	$1,826,998	
Street Trees Division	$1,131,143	$971,276	$1,019,987	$1,024,171	$761,066	$973,133	$1,031,379	
Sub-Total	**$2,930,180**	**$2,819,413**	**$2,837,820**	**$2,929,906**	**$2,393,850**	**$2,720,165**	**$2,858,377**	
% of General Fund	**5.9%**	**6.8%**	**6.6%**	**6.7%**	**5.4%**	**5.9%**	**6.2%**	
General Fund Budget	$49,310,955	$41,282,457	$42,995,996	$43,724,540	$44,449,213	$45,955,168	$46,082,444	
Staffing [a]								
Park Division	13.5	13	12	12	8.75	8.75	9	
Street Trees	11	9	8	6	3	3	3	
Total	**24.5**	**22**	**20**	**18**	**11.75**	**11.75**	**12**	

Notes: The Street Tree program was considered part of the Park Division in 1988 and staffing was 16 FTE. The lifeguard program is not part of this estimate but typically adds 2.5 FTE. Administrative staff adds an additional 2 or 3 FTE. Adjusted for inflation, the budget for FY 1988-1989 in 2014 dollars is $1,188,979. Formating depicts the numbers relative value to other years.

For FY 2015-2016, no confirmation of FTE from Human Resources and Finance was available in time and these should be viewed as estimates.