



Bidwell Park *Pulse*

Quarterly Newsletter of the City of Chico's Park Division

New Trails Initiatives Coming This Year

Trails are one of the most important features of Bidwell Park. Trails lead us to beautiful vistas, favorite swimming holes, or challenge us to go around one more corner. Poor trails also pose some of the greatest threats to the health of the Park. In the next few months, the Parks Division will begin a number of initiatives to help with trails, and educate park users.

Trails are the most important portal for people to access the Park. Yet poorly developed trails are the source of many natural resource problems.

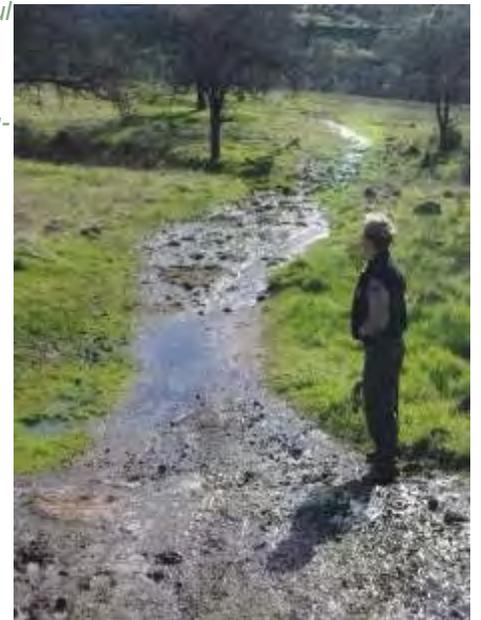
Combine the popularity of Upper and Middle Park with steep topography and thin soils, and sprinkle in a smattering of sensitive plants and other resources; and the Park is at great risk of long-term, permanent damage.

In the next few months, Parks Staff and the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission will be working on a number of initiatives. Parks Staff invites the public to participate in these efforts to keep trails in the Park safe, sustainable, friendly, and protective of resources, while maintaining the fun, challenge and character that draws us into the Park.

Many of these efforts are prompted by objectives outlined in the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan (BPMMP). Upcoming challenges include efforts to:

- Develop a Trails Plan, and update the Trails Manual.
- Educate Park users on trails etiquette and park rules.
- Develop signs and maps.
- Develop a volunteer program and increased workdays for trails.
- Further refine the wet weather policy.

Continue trail improvement projects for the Middle Trail grant project, drainage crossings, and Monkey Face.



Trails Issues Ahead. *The Middle Trail becomes an erosive mini-creek in winter. A continuing project will repair and reroute the trail to help shed the water, minimize widening, and improve the trail.*

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Ranger Message: Swift Water Tips



Spring is upon us, finally! The longer days and warmer weather will entice folks to start thinking about swimming in Big Chico Creek. Especially in a year like 2011, when the snowpack is well above average, Big Chico Creek tends to run fast and cold into early summer. The cold water can take a swimmer by surprise and cause muscle cramps, difficulty breathing, and disorientation. The force of water plus hazards such as rocky chutes and strainers, can also surprise and overwhelm even the best swimmers. Swimmers can get caught in fast moving water or even trapped.

Please use good judgment when you hop in for that first swim! Pick an appropriate place and check the water temperature. If you get caught in the current, remember to go feet first downstream and avoid snags where you can get pinned. If you encounter a strainer or rock, raise your body up onto it as high as you can. Yell for help and do not panic. If you see someone in trouble, call 911 for help. Do not go into the water after the person and put yourself in danger. Use common sense and good judgment when you are enjoying any waterway.

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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 General Services 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, Clay Craig, Lisa Emmerich, Mark Herrera, Jim Mikles, Jim Moravec, Richard Ober (Chair). **Staff Liaison:** Lise Smith-Peters, Administrative Analyst.

Contact

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The Trails Plan is one of the most important steps. The Park's trails are an assemblage of user-defined or historical trails that were not located with natural resources or different recreational users in mind. The Trails Plan will help develop a trail system and identify areas for future work. Public input will be vital in these efforts. As these plans become more defined, Parks Staff will develop a volunteer trails program to help us implement the plan.

In the meantime, Park users will notice a few improvements on trails and signs in the next year. For example, work on the Middle trail will continue in the area east of the parking lot. The trail will be rerouted and improved.

Although it will take some time to get these measures in place, the result will be a Park with fewer trail conflicts and better protection of resources.

Trail Etiquette:



Bidwell Park visitors will notice new signs this spring to remind visitors to "Approach Slowly, Announce Early and Pass Carefully." The signs are intended to remind visitors to safely share the trail. Most of Bidwell Park contains shared trails with a variety of uses. Trails support hikers, bikers, and horse riders, and Park Rangers note that often some simple courtesy and communication makes a big difference for safety and overall enjoyment of the Park. This campaign highlights some of these simple tips .

When passing another trail user, visitors should slow their approach, announce their presence, and pass at a safe time and place. Slowing your approach will help give the other person time to react and move out of the way. When approaching a horse rider, announce your presence and speak to the rider; the sound of your voice will reassure the horse and gives a chance for the rider to anticipate the situation and let you know the best way to pass. When passing another trail user, keep in mind the width of the trail, blind corners, and terrain.



While hiking in groups keep to a single file line. This will cause less erosion and will enable others to pass you. If you are in a large group a person in the front should shout a phrase that indicates the number of people going by and their mode of transportation so that the person being passed will know when everyone has passed. Calling out "two runners passing on the left" or "three bikers coming through" or simply "Hello" gives people a chance to respond and keeps the park friendly and safer.



Remember that you share the Park with different recreational users. Be courteous to other trail users and you will enjoy the same. We hope these simple trail etiquette tips will help visitors to the park have a safe and enjoyable experience.

Park Postcard:



Where is it?

An open pond of water gives migrating birds habitat to rest, eat, and prepare for their upcoming journey. Do you know where it is? Answer on p 8.

Trails Part 2:

Trail/Course Opening and Closing Protocol

Bidwell Park is home to miles of multi-use trails enjoyed by avid cyclists, hikers and equestrians. Use of the trails during or after rain can be destructive given Bidwell Park’s unique features. To protect trails and environmentally sensitive areas from degradation by soil displacement, ruts, and widening, the Park Division has developed an interim (adaptive) wet weather management plan to address trail and disc golf closures. The plan’s methodology uses available information on the amount of rainfall, soil moisture, weather service information and on-site analysis. The protocol utilized by staff to determine when Middle and Upper Park trails and the Peregrine Point Disc Golf should be closed or opened is outlined below.

Adaptive Closure Policy

Whenever rain estimation amounts exceed .25’ in a 24 hour period or footprints within the trail tread are visible during or after a rain event, the trails and/or disc golf course are closed. Staff accesses precipitation data on the California Data Exchange Center website (cdec.water.ca.gov) as well as monitors rainfall amounts on-site using rain gauges.

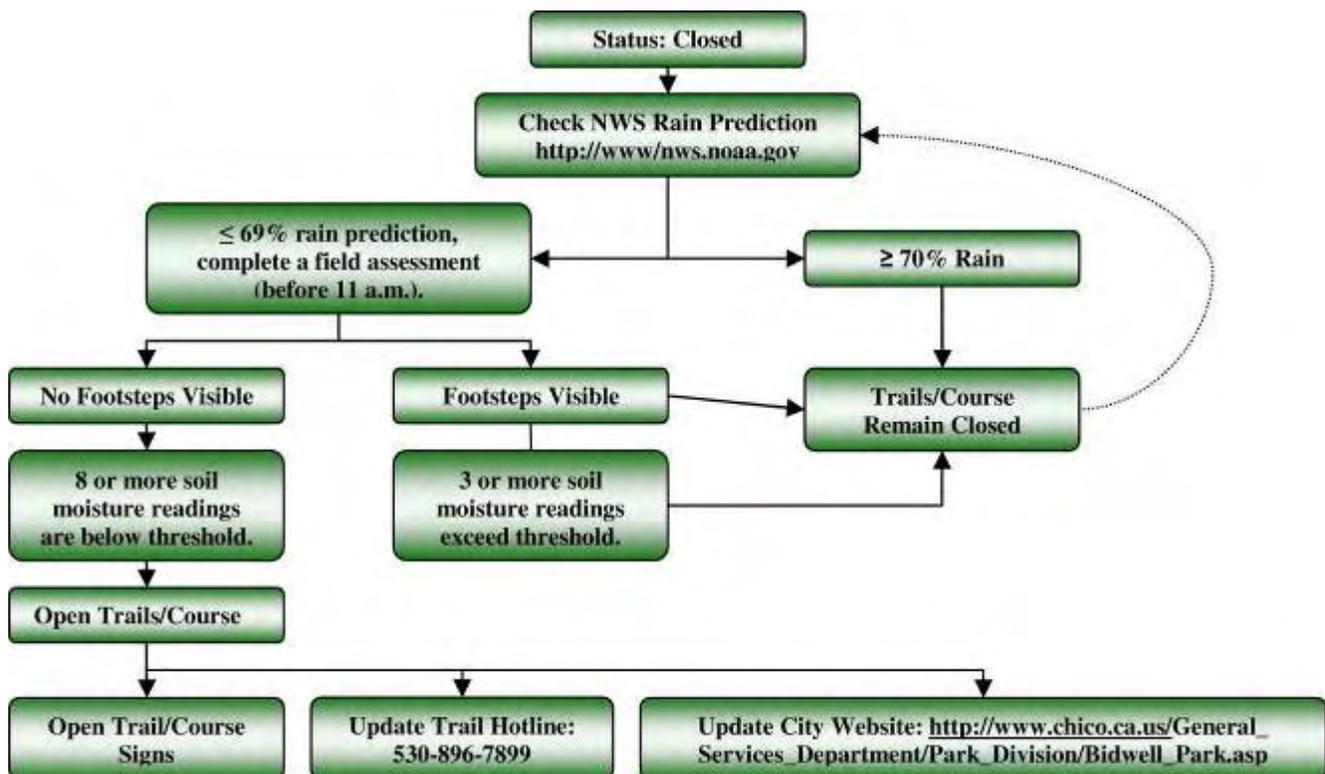
Adaptive Opening Policy

While the procedures for determining closures due to wet weather are more clear cut, the process for determining when it is dry enough for use involves several steps. 24 hours after a rain event, staff performs daily soil assessments on the trails and disc golf course, before 11 am, in order to determine when conditions warrant opening them back up to multi-use. The process used by staff is laid out in the flow chart below.

Future Plans

The Park Division is in the process of reviewing and updating the wet weather plan into a policy. The plan is meant to accompany the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan and the Bidwell Park Trails Manual as an adaptive tool to manage wet weather use. For additional information or to provide feedback or input contact the Park Division at 530-896-7800.

Trail and Peregrine Point Disc Golf Course Opening Protocol





Street Tree Planting—It's not too late to receive a free tree!

Traditionally over the last several years, the City of Chico has planted trees that were missing or removed at the request of the citizens. Young trees in developments had often died from poor planting, neglect, or unintentional injuries. Some people had lost older trees that were declining or hazardous. With budget shortfalls and staff shortages, the City needed to reduce costs and that included the tree planting program. While considering the problem Urban Forest Manger, Denice Britton, realized that many of the oldest trees in Chico had been planted by homeowners and citizens in an effort to provide shade and beauty. Why couldn't they do that again?

On January 31, 2011 the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission approved a new program to provide free trees to Chico homeowners and citizens who apply for a permit to plant a tree in front of their home and agree to care for it for 3 years. The City normally waters trees for 3 years, after which time they are considered established.

Workshops

There were 2 workshops held in February and March to teach citizens the best ways to plant trees and to help them get the permit process started. The first workshop had 11 attendees and the second had more than 20 participants. Trees will be available through the Street Tree Division until April 1st this year. Attendance at a workshop is not required, although the information will help citizens properly care for the trees.

The actual site for the planting will still need to be approved by the Street Tree Division - and it will be marked on the curb, as it is currently done. Utilities, etc. are taken into account when the tree location is marked, and USA Alert is called.

Benefits

The program expands the tree planting season, since citizens can begin planting trees in the fall, and can continue until about April 1st. The Street Tree Division will continue to plant trees in the downtown district, and in other locations as required. The program frees the Street Tree crew to focus more on formative pruning of young trees in both new and older neighborhoods. Formative pruning is critical for the long term health and structure of the tree.

The program will offer workshops monthly in the spring and again in October and November. Any citizen can attend the workshops to learn how best to plant a tree. If you are interested in participating, please call 530-896-7800 for further information.

How to Apply:

Permit forms require the homeowner to provide their address, their preferred tree species, and to show where they intend to plant the tree. They must also provide a copy of their homeowner's insurance policy. The final step is to sign the agreement that the tree planter will:

- a. Plant the tree in a valid Public Right of Way (PROW) location, where there is adequate room for a Street Tree.
- b. Plant the tree according to the City's current standard detail.
- c. Agree to water the tree and keep the area around the base of the tree mulched and free of lawn, weeds or other plants out 18" from the trunk.

The City also stipulated that it will only provide one street tree per location, although the homeowner may replace the tree if for some reason it does not thrive. The City will prune the tree in future years.

Upcoming Workshops will explain the program in detail. Please call (530) 896-7800 For more information

Partnerships:

Spanish Broom Removal Work Continues

Beginning January 10th, the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve (BCCER) Broom Crew, Brendon Armstrong, Mark Hererra (Park Commissioner) and sometimes Jeff Mott BCCER General Manager, started removing Spanish broom (*Spartium junceum*) (see below) from Upper Bidwell Park's northeastern most reaches. The broom crew started at the property line of the Ecological Reserve and worked their way west along both sides of Big Chico Creek.

With funding support from Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance, CA Native Plant Society, Mt. Lassen Chapter (CNPS), Friends of Bidwell Park (FOBP), and League of Women Voters and the City of Chico Park Division, the BCCER crew manually removed broom with weed wrenches over several weeks. The crew identified large broom plants up to 15 feet tall with a much higher density of plants on the northern side of the creek. The team worked on the north side over 4 days (30 hours) and plants too large for manual removal were cut down with chain-saws with herbicide applied to the stumps.

Volunteers from CNPS, FOBP and Park Staff joined the BCCER

broom crew for two days. The "Broom Bash" work sessions were in honor of John Copeland, who prior to passing away in Fall 2009, successfully lead volunteers in removing this weed along Big Chico Creek for many years.

John was a member of CNPS and an ardent Bidwell Park volunteer.

More broom removal days are in the planning stages so stay tuned!



CNPS member Woody Elliott works with Brendon Arm-

Invasive Plant Profile:

Spanish Broom

Common name(s): Spanish broom, gorse, weaver's broom

Scientific name: *Spartium junceum*. **Family:** Fabaceae

Native To: southern Mediterranean region of Europe.

Means of Introduction: CA ornamental trade in 1848 in San Francisco.

Current CA Distribution: North coast counties, San Francisco; Sacramento Valley through South Coast counties to the Mexican border.

Status/Weed Rating:

Statewide impact: High (CAL-IPC)

CDFA Noxious Weed List: CalEPPC: B

What does it look like?

General: Perennial shrub more than head high, with cylindrical rush-like branches. Green rushlike branches when young and branches turn brown as it ages.

Leaves: Half an inch in length and elongated to lance-shaped.

Flowers: Large yellow, fragrant flowers (shaped like pea flowers). **Fruit:** Pods are abundant with 10-15 seeds; these split when dry and twist into a spiral shape.

Reproduction and Dispersal: After 2-3 years, Spanish broom reproduces by seed. Its flowers are pollinated by bees and seed is produced in late March to early April. Pods mature and then pop/split a short distance from the plant in late May and early June.

Where is it found invading? Coastal areas and the Sacramento Valley. It grows in disturbed areas, river banks, road cuts in poor, stony soils. In Chico, broom is found in Lindo Channel, Sycamore

more Creek and Middle and Upper Parks along Big Chico Creek.

Why worry? One plant can produce 7,000 to 10,000 seeds in one season. Seed viability is greater than 5 years. Spanish broom spreads rapidly and established thick shrub communities that prevent native plants from establishing. Mature stands of broom pose fire hazards during the dry season.

How can it be managed? Mechanical removal of smaller plants ensures reduction of seeds being produced – the entire root system must be removed. For broom, glyphosate applied as a 2-3% v/v foliar spray has been an effective treatment. Triclopyr applied as a 25% basal bark application in an oil carrier is also effective. Some resprouting may occur with these treatments and follow-up management will be necessary for future flushes of seedlings.

What is being done in Bidwell Park? Where accessible, volunteers have manually removed broom plants from Middle and Upper Park for over 12 years and from Lindo Channel and Sycamore Creek. Broom has also been applied as a basal bark application with triclopyr in hard to reach spots of Upper Bidwell Park.

Where do I go for more information? Invasive Plants of California's Wildlands (University of CA Press, Berkeley, CA 2000: pp. 306 – 309. Online at CA Department of Food and Agriculture (www.cdffa.ca.gov/phpps/ipc/weedinfo/))



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Volunteers:

Earth Day Park & Bike Path Cleanup! - April 23

The 6th annual *Earth Day in Bidwell Park* will take place Saturday, April 23 from 10 am to 1 pm in Bidwell Park. Projects will take place at various locations in Lower Bidwell and there will be a City of Chico bike path cleanup.

Cedar Grove picnic area (off of East Eighth Street & Cedar Grove Way; just west of the Chico Creek Nature Center) will serve as the sign in and tool pick up location for some projects.

Volunteer projects include native plant gardening, removing invasive weeds, cleaning in and around the Chico Creek Nature Center, a Big Chico Creek Clean Up and



Earth Day 2010—CSU Sigma Nu hackberry removal team!

Volunteer Spotlight-

Friends Log Over 11,000 Volunteer Hours

What started in 2002 as interested individuals meeting about trail related issues culminated in the creation of the Friends of Bidwell Park (FOBP). The group obtained non-profit status in early 2004. Now with over with over 11,204 hours logged working on Bidwell Park projects, the group continues to focus on invasive weed projects in particular. They have recently added a new program element, hosting college Park Interns. This program gives college students on the ground/in the park hands-on experience. FOBP is also working on a plant inventory for Bidwell Park started several years ago with renowned California botanist and plant collector, Lowell Ahart.

FOBP utilizes the advice and research of biologists/plant specialists on how to eradicate and control exotic weeds in the Park, supporting the Park's Master Management Plan. One of the first invasive weeds that FOBP identified with the help of a botanist and researched its removal method was bladder senna (*Colutea Arborescens*), Originally introduced in John Bidwell's experimental Forestry Station (current site of the

City of Chico Bike path cleanup (there are pre-assigned groups for this).

Participants must wear sturdy, closed-toed shoes, long pants, and weather appropriate clothing (some areas have poison oak). The Park Division, with help from Park volunteer team leaders, Friends of Bidwell Park, Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance, Community Action Volunteers in Education and the CA Conservation Corps, will provide instruction, gloves, tools, water and refreshments.

With CSU, Chico's Interfraternity Council adopting this event as their spring community service day, this is expected to be one of the busiest volunteer days of the year. **Please bring shovels, loppers and your own gloves if you have them.**

Event sponsors include: Starbucks (coffee), Lundberg Family Farms (refreshments), Home Depot (supplies and tools) and Recology Zero Waste (greenwaste dumpster). *Minor volunteers under 13 need to be accompanied by an adult and all minor volunteers 17 years and younger must present a release form signed by a parent or guardian.*

To Participate

Individuals meet p at Cedar Grove starting at 10 am. Groups need to pre-register with the Volunteer Coordinator at 530-896-7831 or download the registration form on the City of Chico's website at: http://www.ci.chico.ca.us/general_services_department/park_division/volunteering.asp

World of Trees next to Cedar Grove), FOBP has mapped bladder senna throughout Lower Park and conducts annual removal follow-up work sessions.

For the last 7 years, the group has worked on removing Japanese privets (*Ligustrum japonicum*). They first removed these invasive trees at the Five Mile Recreation Area to help Park Rangers have better visibility.

The group has spent close to 4,000 volunteer hours surveying the park, planning and actively removing thousands of privets and hauling these weed trees out of the forested areas. The Park Division supports the removal of privets through its own work sessions, donations of green waste dumpsters and Park crew time removing the debris piles. FOBP has also helped park neighbors, such as the Women's Club, remove their invasive weeds. Additional weeds that the Friends focus on include puncturevine (horrible on bike tires); and tree of heaven (ailanthus). Check out their website for more information: www.friendsofbidwellpark.org.

Street Trees:

Arbor Day Tree Planting

The City of Chico celebrated California’s Arbor Day with the Boys and Girls Club at the Sycamore Pool area on Monday, March 7, 2011.

Young people from the Boys and Girls Club planted four young valley oak trees and one Big Leaf maple to provide for the next generation of trees at the pool. Since the area surrounding the pool is covered with lawn, natural regeneration of the oaks and other trees cannot take place, so new trees need to be planted in order to maintain the existing canopy.

Four trees were planted in 2007 and are doing quite well. The Park Division wanted to continue the effort to develop a multi-staged canopy of different aged trees. The trees being planted are all native trees to the area, although this will be the first big leaf maple planted at One Mile. It will have dark green leaves and eventually become about 30 to 40 feet in height and spread.

Arbor Day was started in Nebraska in 1872 and was celebrated with the planting of a million trees to provide wind-breaks and erosion control. Chico is blessed with many trees, but we must remember that caring for our urban forest requires the planting of new trees each year, according to Denice Britton, Urban Forest Manager for the City of Chico. “Other Holidays repose upon the past; Arbor Day proposes for the future.”



For further information on street trees contact Denice Britton,

Partner Profile:

Chico Community Observatory

Information Courtesy of the Chico Community Observatory.

Our First Decade!

The Chico Community Observatory opened on November 17, 2001. Located on the Southwest Side of Horseshoe Lake, it was managed under the Greater Chico Kiwanis Club until last year. The observatory is now managed by a non-profit, the Pacific Center for Astronomical Outreach. The hours are Thursday through Sunday, clear nights, 6 pm to 8:45 pm in the winter, and 8 pm to 10:45 pm in the summer. Everyone is welcome, and it is always free.

In 1999, Kris Koenig, the brains and brawn behind the facility, proposed that Chico create a community observatory. Through determination and a partnership with the Kiwanis, the observatory was completed in 2001. Since then Anita Ingraio, the ever-present curator, and Kris have trained dozens of student and adult docents in the basics of astronomy,



UPCOMING EVENTS

April 3– Saturn at opposition: It’s at it’s closest to earth and will be fully illuminated by the sun.

April 21-22– Lyrids meteor shower. The best viewing will be after midnight.

April 30– Mercury, Venus, Jupiter and Mars can be seen clustered together.

May 5-6– Eta Aquarids meteor shower. The best viewing will be after midnight.

June 21-Sun it’s most northwest position in the sky. 1st day of summer.

telescope use, and in operating the facility for the public.

In 2006, to meet the growing popularity, the Shoemaker Open Sky Planetarium opened for guests to relax in, and enjoy the constellation tours. We believe this is the world’s first outdoor planetarium.

Schools, youth groups, and any other official organizations may schedule a private program, Monday through Wednesday, by calling (530) 343-5635 or emailing Anita at anita@interstellarstudios.com.

As we spin into our next decade, we are looking forward to more outreach. We are dedicated to awarding scholarships and grants to motivated young docents, while encouraging astronomy and science education for young and old alike. Come check out your universe with us!

Disc Golf Course Opens

Long course opened February 12, 2011. The short course is now closed.

On Saturday, February 12, 2011, the City of Chico opened the Peregrine Point Disc Golf Course to the public. Under sunny skies, representatives from the City and Outdoor Recreation Advocacy, Inc. (ORAI) presented a brief opening ceremony at the trailhead and disc golf course facility, located off of Hwy 32 approximately 3.5 miles east of Chico.

City staff has been working with ORAI toward the construction of an 18-hole disc golf long course and installation of mitigation measures as required by the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan Environmental Impact Report and Mitigation and Monitoring Plan. Disc golf has long been a controversial topic at

the site. The completed course and mitigation measures open a new chapter toward remedying past damages and improving management of the site.

ORAI began work on September 1, 2010,

use of split-rail fencing, rocks, and signs to realign and improve the trail system, and the installation of other mitigation measures to repair past damage and minimize future damage. Additional improvements will be made over time. The short course at the site has been removed as part of the agreement.

ORAI has contributed approximately \$50,000 to the project by providing nearly 2000 hours of voluntary labor and other donated materials. The City provided an additional \$42,000 in "California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002" (Proposition 40) funds for materials and supplies for the project.



and improvements include the installation of new disc golf tee pads and baskets, the

Answer to "Where is it?": A new 1/2 mile ADA accessible trail at the City of Chico Water Pollution Control Plant now offers the public the opportunity to view wildlife from bird blind that looks out onto nearly 32 acres of wetland habitat. The trail and parking area is open from 7 am to 7 pm (Oct-Mar) and 7 am to 9 pm (Apr-Sep).



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