



Bidwell Park *Pulse*

Quarterly Newsletter of the City of Chico's Park Division

City Plaza's Holiday Sparkle

City Plaza hosts many annual events including the Community Tree Lighting and the Festival of Lights.

Many holiday seasons have brought cheer and festivity to our downtown park. City Plaza was established in 1872 by the town's founder John Bidwell. Bidwell hoped to create a verdant, civilized block of community space for public gathering and community enrichment. Of the many events held annually in City Plaza, the Downtown Business Association's Community Tree Lighting is one of the most cherished.

One special tree, the majestic 55' Blue Atlas Cedar that stands in front of City Hall, has been given the honor of serving as Chico's Community Christmas Tree. Every year, the City of Chico Tree Crew adorns the tree with over 6,000 twinkling LED lights and come nightfall hundreds of Chicoans gather to see it lit up in all of its splendor—marking the start of the holiday season. In addition to musical performances this year's festivities included a visit from Santa—who arrived in an antique fire engine with members of the City of Chico Fire Department—

and a special message from Mayor Ann Schwab.

For the past several years, another holiday symbol has joined the Christmas Tree at City Plaza. The Chabad Jewish Center lit a menorah on December 1, the first evening of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, which is also known as the Festival of Lights. A menorah is an iconic, nine-branched candelabrum on which one additional candle per night is lit until the whole menorah is aglow in celebration.

For more than 130 years the plaza has been the hub around which our civic and commercial activities move. More than that, it has been the heart of our community spirit. It is a public space for special events that embrace our diversity while bringing us together as Chicoans. This is especially evident while the plaza glows and sparkles with winter holiday cheer.



Oh Christmas Tree...Chico's Christmas Tree in City Plaza was lit in early December.



UPDATE: North One Mile Restroom Underway

One Mile Recreation Area's permanent restroom is scheduled to be completed at the end of January. United Building Contractors are constructing the new structure which is located in the parking lot off of Vallombrosa Way. When completed, the new restroom will replace the portable restrooms and provide potable water and additional storage for park staff. This project is funded with California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 40) funds.

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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 Park 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. Park 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, and Rich Ober **Staff Liaison:** Carmen Parachou, Administrative Analyst.

Contact

Questions, comments, or photo contributions?

Contact us:

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BPPC:

New Commissioners Appointed

In December, the Chico City Council appointed Commissioners to fill 5 seats for the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission (BPPC). Mark Herrera, Jim Moravec, and Clay Craig (2 year term), will join Lisa Emmerich and Richard Ober, who were reappointed. Current Commissioners Mary Brentwood and Jim Mikles terms will expire in 2012.

At least two new members were assured to join the BPPC, when Chair Jamison Watts resigned his position, and Commissioner Jane Turney chose not to reapply. Longtime Commissioner Steve Lucas was not reappointed. Mr. Craig will fill the remainder of Chair Watts' two year appointment. All other positions will be for 4 year terms.

Many citizens expressed interest in serving on the BPPC with a total of 23 applicants, the most of any City Commission, vying for the 5 open positions. New Commissioners will be seated at the January 31st meeting.

Announcements:

Park Watch Training Coming Up

If you walk, bike or ride horses in Bidwell Park, make your park experience even more valuable and fun by joining Park Watch. Park Watch volunteers serve as ambassadors to park visitors. Volunteers must be at least 18 years old, pass a criminal background check and volunteer a minimum of 4 hours per month. The required training session for new volunteers is on March 10th from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the City Council Chamber in Conference Room 1. There's also a follow-up park walk at 1-Mile on Saturday March 12th at 10 a.m. The City of Chico Park Division supports the program. For an application or to RSVP contact Park Ranger Shane Romain at 530-896-7834 or email ParkWatch@ci.chico.ca.us.

Next Park Talk Scheduled

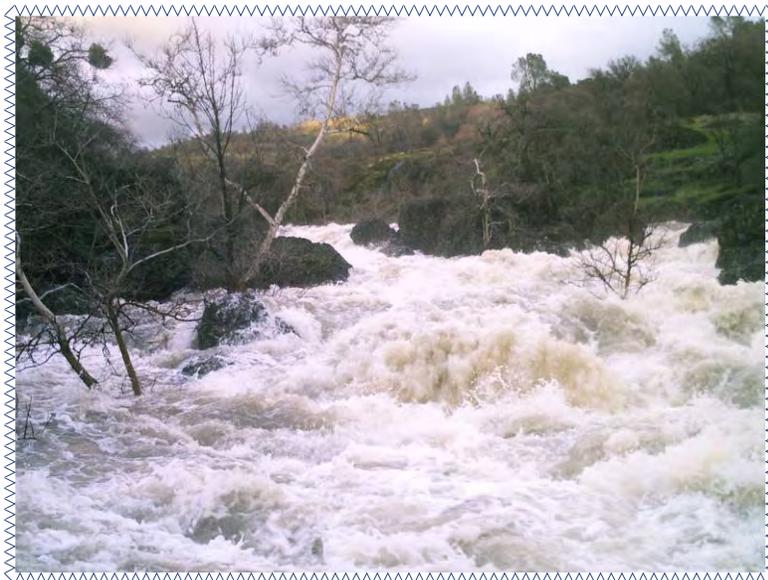
The next "Park Talk" meeting will take place in March. Staff will be on hand to answer questions about new park projects and programs and will have maps and materials related to Bidwell Park resources and upcoming management efforts. The meetings are intended as an informal opportunity for the public to learn about management, outreach, and volunteer efforts in the Park. Subsequent Park Talks are scheduled for June, September, and December. For more information, contact the Park Division at 530-896-7800.

Ranger Featured in "Inspired by California"

In September, Kirby Scudder, Director of the Santa Cruz Institute of Contemporary Arts, came to visit Chico. Mr. Scudder is working on a year long documentary film project titled, "Inspired by California." Ranger Romain met with Mr. Scudder, gave him a tour of Bidwell Park and provided information about the Bidwells, CSUC and other local features. "Kirby's project is a fantastic idea! His heart is really into reminding folks what a great state California is despite all the negative press lately," remarked Ranger Romain. View the interview at <http://www.inspiredbycalifornia.com/?p=1752>.



Park Postcard:



Where is it? Winter means water and areas of the Park can be transformed into rushing torrents. This area is downstream of one of the most common summer destinations in the Park. Do you know where it is? Answer on p.8.

Trails—Part 1:

The Adaptive Wet Weather Management Plan

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 in some areas given Bidwell Park’s unique geological features.

Lying in a convergence zone of the volcanic Cascade Range and Sierra Nevada foothills, a transition of soil types occurs within short distances. The alluvial soils near Big Chico Creek are deep, relatively level, and absorb water well. These forgiving soils tolerate a variety of activities. As you cross Upper Park Road, the soils become more shallow and steeper, with less silt and sand and more clay and rocks. These less forgiving soils hold less water and tend to shed rainfall, and both compaction and erosion become greater problems. Once the North Rim is reached, a craggy, rough surface with shallow soils is found. These types of soil transitions occur multiple times throughout the park.

To protect trails and environmentally sensitive areas from degradation by soil displacement, ruts, and widening, the BPPC and Park Division have developed an interim (adaptive) wet weather management plan to address trail and disc golf closures. The plan’s methodology uses information on rainfall, soil moisture, and on-site analysis and articulates means to communicate information to the public. The approach used is based on measurable, objective information that can be tracked and is adaptable so that adjustments can be made as needed.

The wet weather plan is one element of a comprehensive plan that involves maintaining, upgrading, and rerouting trails in known problem areas. An overall comprehensive objective for the trail plan is to create and maintain a well functioning and ecologically sustainable trail system that accommodates a variety of users.

The Park Division plans new efforts for communicating trail



status. Currently information on the trails, disc golf course and Upper Park Road can be found on the City website, trail hotline and trailhead signs.

The BPPC will likely update the wet weather plan in the near future. With public input, stewardship, and support, the interim wet weather plan will transform into a policy that will preserve and protect Bidwell Park resources for generations to come.

Part 2: trail opening and closing protocol.

Bidwell Park Trails Information



Closure Hotline: 530-896-7899
 Park Office: 530-896-7800
 Ranger Desk: 530-896-7834

City Website: http://www.ci.chico.ca.us/General_Services_Department/Park_Division/Bidwell_Park.asp

Wildlife Viewing:

Water Pollution Control Plant Wetlands Trail Opens

As part of the recently completed 12 million gallon per day treatment plant expansion, the City of Chico Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP), now offers a new wetlands area and public use trail. The existing 32-acre oxidation pond used for emergency storage of treated wastewater has been constructed into a wetland area. The created Wetlands serves as valuable habitat for wildlife and waterfowl, and provides an opportunity for public wildlife viewing, education, and recreation. The handicap accessible, half mile, crushed granite trail, leads from the new Wetlands parking area off Chico River Road, to an Audubon provided bird blind, located at the northwest corner of the Wetlands pond. Features of the constructed pond include California native vegetation for wildlife habitat/cover, shallow water zones for shorebirds and deeper water zones for migrating birds, bird nesting islands, and tree snags placed in the pond as spots for bird roosting.

Please contact the WPCP for more information at 894-4300.

To Get There:
 Take West 5th Street (3.5 miles west of Walnut Street), to the new parking area, approximately 500 feet past the main WPCP entrance (4827 Chico River Road).

Wetland visiting hours:
 October-March, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 pm.
 April-September, 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 pm.

Street Trees:

Heritage Tree Program Kicks Off

In March 2010, after two years of sub-committee meetings and review, the Chico City Council approved several revisions in the Municipal Code relating to trees (CMC Section 16.68.010). This revision included setting up a Voluntary Heritage Tree Program to recognize significant trees growing in Chico. On November 2, the City Council approved the first 6 Heritage trees. Three of those trees are located in Chico's Parks and Open Space.

A 67" valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) tree in Annie's Glen was nominated because of its prominent location next to the bike path near the entrance from Orient and East 2nd Street.

A second tree located in the open space preserve in the Hillview Terrace Subdivision. This 53" diameter Blue Oak (*Quercus douglasii*) is clearly seen by looking east from Baroni Neighborhood Park. Blue oaks are found in the more upland areas of Chico, where the water table drops below 30' in depth. They therefore rely on an extensive root system, rather than the deep sinker roots of the valley oak. This makes them slower growing and more sensitive to construction that encroaches upon their canopy and root zone.

A mid-west species of tree that was likely planted by the Bidwells in Children's Playground. This 52" Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) is one of the largest in California, rivaling one in Sacramento that is 54". It is an excellent specimen, with little to no limb breakage and is found at the north end of the Park. It should be in full fall color for most of November and December.

Now that they are officially designated, plaques will be placed at the base of these trees. The three other trees approved are a 78" Valley oak located near the corner of Eaton and Cohasset and a 66" oak on Heritage Oak Drive. A 70" Bastogne or Paradox walnut (*Juglans hindsii X regia*) located at the new Park Forest Subdi-



vision is a seedling hybrid between the English and California black walnut. Fairly common in the Chico area, this tree was planted in 1900 as a pollinator for a small family owned walnut orchard.

Property developers of Park Forest LLC set aside the area around the tree to protect it and feature the tree as a center piece of their Park Forest project on East 8th Street across from the Nature Center. They built a large ring around the dripline to protect it during construction. To date no significant damage has occurred from construction.

Two additional trees, located in Community Park, were nominated by the Chico Area Recreation District for the program and approved by the City Council. Citizens owning significant trees who are interested in having them considered for Heritage Tree Status can contact Denice Britton, Urban Forest Manager, at 530- 896-7802.

Trails:

Middle Trail Work in Upper Park

The City of Chico's Park Division started the Middle Trail Rehabilitation Project last October. It was originally scheduled to start last spring but due to a heavy rain season, was postponed. The CA Department of Parks and Recreation granted the City \$175,802 to fund the project's 3 components over several years.

Many types of visitor use of and current trail conditions have led to increasing erosion issues and destruction of native habitat on Upper Bidwell Park's main artery, the Middle Trail.

To address these issues, the first element of the project was the rehabilitation of 700 feet of the Middle Trail, east of parking lot E above Day Camp.

This grant funded project incorporates sustainable trail building techniques i.e.: a more curvilinear design, the addition of undulations - grade changes, out-slope, and the restoration of native habitat along the trail. These design features helped define the trail tread, allow water to drain from the trail reducing erosion and

eliminate standing water on the trail. The result will be a sustainable-all weather trail that will help preserve the beauty and native habitat of Bidwell Park.

The project utilized crews of California Conservation Corps (CCC) members from the Chico satellite office and a trail crew from Redding. The CCC crews will work alongside the Park trail crew and their work day will begin at 6:30 am and last until 4 pm.

Other components of the project will include the creation and installation of interpretive educational signs at Parking lots E and C and rehabilitation and upgrading of 710 feet of existing trail to accessible standards thus completing the accessible trail loop off of Parking lot E.

For more information on the project, call the Park Division at 530-896-7801.

Invasive Plant Profile:

English Hawthorn Stifles Oak Regeneration

Common names: English Hawthorn, Woodland Hawthorn, Whitethorn, Smooth Hawthorn, Midland Hawthorn

Scientific name: *Crataegus laevigata* **Family:** Rosaceae
Native To: Europe and North Africa. **Means of Introduction:** Introduced to gardens of North America (including the West Coast) from England and has been sold here since the 1800s.
Current CA Distribution: USDA zones 4 to 7 in general.
Status/Weed Rating:
 Statewide impact: Red alert (CAL-IPC)
 CDFA Noxious Weed List: Not listed

What does it look like?

General: A small deciduous tree with a close dense canopy with zigzag stems, thorny branches that reach up to about 20 feet in height and width. Its slender thorns grow up to 1" long. Bark is rough in texture, light brown to grayish brown in color.

Leaves: Alternate, simple, ½ to 2 ½" long with 3 to 5 lobes, dark green with ¼ to ¾" petiole.

Flowers: depend upon variety, they are usually a single flower white or red. It blooms in May.

Fruit: clustered, round, and bright red. Usually ripens in September or October.

Reproduction and Dispersal: Birds and other wildlife enjoy eating the fruit and spread the seed. Seeds may also spread by clinging to machinery, vehicles, and animals.

Where is it found invading? In riparian habitats and woodlands, especially in areas of Lower Park this plant is crowding out the growth of native oaks in dense, discrete patches.

Why worry? Hawthorn is used as a hedge and its canopy can be very thick, shading out oak seedlings, native grass's and wild flowers. This is an example of a plant that is impacting Bidwell Park, but is not yet of concern in other areas of the state. However, if left unchecked, this plant could have negative impacts in riparian areas across the state.

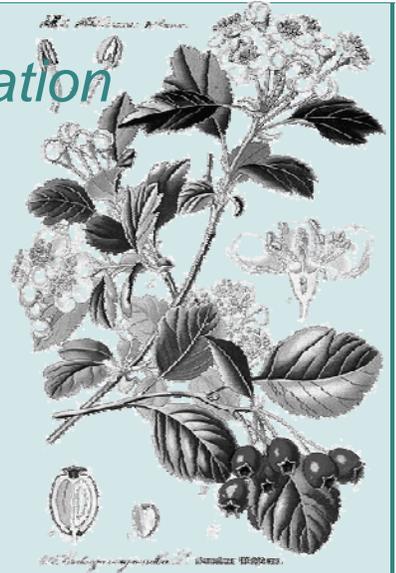
How can it be managed?

To ensure sustained removal, complete removal of root ball is necessary; or cut near ground level before seed production, followed by direct herbicide treatment to stumps to prevent re-growth.

What is being done in Bidwell Park? Volunteers have removed small Hawthorns manually in Lower Bidwell Park at various locations. In 2011, Staff and volunteers will be working to develop a demonstration area near Madrone Ave. to show some removal techniques (and benefits to native plants). Although these areas are dense with this plant, it is not yet widespread and is a good candidate for eradication. Citizens may help by removing this plant from their yards.

Where do I go for more information?

<http://www.cal-ipc.org>

*Partners:*

Join PlantRight for its 2011 Nursery Survey!

(Information Courtesy of PlantRight.)

The PlantRight campaign has invited us to participate in their 2nd annual Spring Nursery Survey between March and June of 2011. PlantRight is a partnership between scientists, government agencies, environmental groups, and the horticulture industry that works to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive garden plants in California. The survey is designed to detect the presence or absence of invasive plants in the inventories of retail nurseries across the state and allows PlantRight to monitor changes in the market for invasive plants over time.

Participation in the 2011 PlantRight Spring Nursery Survey is voluntary and entails: viewing an educational training session online in late February (1hr); visiting local nurseries randomly selected from PlantRight's list (1hr per nursery); and submitting the completed survey forms online (30min per nursery). Please note that PlantRight expects a strong level of participation in Butte County in 2011, so if you are able to visit stores in a neighboring county we highly encourage you to do so. This past year, volunteers found this survey to be a great opportunity to visit local nurseries they had never been to before.

In 2010, 66 volunteers from 27 counties participated in the Spring Nursery Survey. Their contributions revealed that 78% of the 73 surveyed nurseries were not carrying any of the 19 invasive plants on PlantRight's list. This percentage was higher than originally expected and we hope it continues to grow to 100%. In addition, 92% of survey participants rated their experience as positive, indicating their ability to enjoy themselves while contributing to an important conservation cause!

If you are interested in participating in the Spring Nursery Survey, please contact Greg Richardson for more information at g-richardson@suscon.org or (415) 977-0380, ext 323. live. In your message, include your contact information, how you heard about the survey and the county you wish to survey in.



For More Information
Contact:

g-richardson@suscon.org
or (415) 977-0380

Volunteers:

Fall Finds Bidwell Park & Greenway Volunteers Busy!

The rain may send some people indoors, but for Bidwell Park's hearty volunteers, the rainy season means work time. The recent wet weather has been perfect for many Bidwell Park Volunteer Projects, as a little bit of rain moistens the soil and makes weeds easier to pull out and is perfect planting weather. Here is a snapshot of a few recent efforts:

Some **Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance** members cultivated native plants at home in the group's newly inspired Native Plant Project. With board member Michael Stauffer (also a park volunteer) and watershed coordinator, Nani Teves, leading the way, members last spring planted seeds and cuttings obtained from Bidwell Park (with Park Division approval). Their efforts yielded over 75 plants, including willow, elderberry, redbud, deergrass, Oregon ash, clematis, spice bush, coffeeberry and box elder. On November 20 in the cool rain, Alliance members and volunteers added their healthy native plants to the Sycamore Restoration area (near Council Ring). Plans are underway for starting again in spring 2011.



Weekly volunteer Kevin prepared and planted willow cuttings and Santa Barbara sedge into the creek bank of the Sycamore Restoration site.

The **Barber Neighborhood Association** and the **Creeks and Open Spaces Action Group** held two community workdays at the Comanche Creek greenway (November 11th and on December 11th), with 20-30 volunteers removing blackberry and tending baby oak trees. The next scheduled workday is January 22 (10 am to 1 pm).

The Park Division and six **Chico High School (CHS) Horticulture students** have teamed up for a 3rd year of the **Bidwell Park Native Plant Project**. Students from Quinn Mendez's class grow native plants in the school's greenhouse! In the process, they learn about the unique care it takes to grow native plants (i.e. some seeds need cold stratification and gibberellic acid, a potent hormone). Park volunteers collect seed during the year for the program (thanks Paula, Wes, Jim, Mike, and Blake). The CHS students will plant some of their plants on January 24th in the Sycamore Restoration Area. Students participate in the project for a full year as an addition to their horticulture class. Paula Shapiro from the CA Native Plant Society, Mt. Lassen Chapter has served as an advisor for the last 3 years.

For more information:

Phone: 530-896-7831

Web: http://www.ci.chico.ca.us/general_services_department/park_division/volunteer_calendar.asp

Winter/Spring 2011 Volunteer Sessions:

Most Wednesdays, Thursdays and some Saturdays.

CSU's Associated Students **Community Action Volunteers in Education (CAVE)** just completed its 8th semester (4th year!) of supporting the Adopt-A-Park program. This semester, 20 CSU students worked in the park on Volunteer Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and with the Friends of Bidwell Park. Once again, we had a great group, who removed invasive weeds and planted native plants in various Bidwell Park locations.

Friends of Bidwell Park's (FOBP) Privet Removal Project, initially began in 2004, has continued this fall with vim and vigor. Susan Mason conducted 3 to 4 volunteer sessions each week to remove the last of the large (>1" diameter) privet trees in Lower Park. FOBP triumphantly declared an official close to the initial removal of privet

trees from the area between Annie's Glen and the east edge of Five Mile. In addition, 133 trees that

"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."

- Elizabeth Andrew

volunteers were unable to dig out will be treated with herbicide on their trunks ("basal bark" treatment) thanks to 2 licensed pesticide applicators who donated their time to help finish the project. The Park Division has devoted volunteers, park staff time, and green waste dumpsters (Thanks!! Recology Zero Waste) to the project.

CSU's **Sigma Chi Fraternity** adopted picnic site #40 last summer, starting with Himalayan blackberry and catalpa removal. The group is raising several hundred dollars now to purchase native plants. In early February, they will plant Santa Barbara sedge, California native blackberry and native shrubs at this popular picnic site.



Members of CSU, Chico's Sigma Chi Fraternity removed a catalpa tree at their adopted site #40.

Donations and Gifts:

Generosity Makes a Difference

This fall, the City of Chico Park Division participated for its 4th year in the North Valley Community Foundation's (NVCF) Annie B's Community Drive. Nonprofits from Butte, Glenn, Tehama, and Colusa Counties encourage donors to give funds over the two month fund-drive. The NVCF then matches an organization's funds raised with a percentage based on the amount raised. The Park Division received \$4,043 from donors and this financial support will fund the Park Division Intern program, Bidwell Park habitat restoration efforts and support on-going maintenance of the Park.

Thanks go to our local generous supporters for their donations to help us keep Bidwell Park special. Donations may be given at any time to help with maintenance and special projects in the Park. Donations are tax deductible! For more information on how you can help, please call Lise Smith-Peters at 530-896-7831.

Some Recent Examples. Thanks!

Annie B's and Community members—\$4,043!

Chico Running Club— a new, all-season water fountain for the Horseshoe Lake area in Upper Park.

Lifeline Training Center— First Aid/CPR classes to 14 staff members.

Recology Zero Waste— 30 yard green waste dumpsters for the Lower Park Privet Project & for Make a Difference Day.

Starbucks— Coffee for Make a Difference Day!

Upcoming needs:

Caper Acre play structures, Restroom fixes, Horseshoe Lake Bike Racks, & Vita Course replacements.

Can you help? Call! 530-896-7831

Partner Profile:

Chico Equestrian Association

Information Courtesy of the Chico Equestrian Association

The Chico Equestrian Association (CEA) is made up of an enthusiastic group of Butte County residents who enjoy horses and horseback riding. The club, which maintains an equestrian facility in Upper Bidwell Park, hosts a variety of horse shows, rides, and other events for its members and the community. One of the main purposes of CEA is to abide by Annie Bidwell's wishes and help assure that horses always have a place in Bidwell Park.

CEA is not the first equestrian club to call the Bidwell Park its home. An earlier group, called the Chico Riding Club, was created back in 1942 and had a similar goal of maintaining the history and presence of horses in the park. In the 1960s, CRC built a riding arena in Lower Park, and in the 1960s, they replaced it with an arena off of Arena Way in Upper Bidwell Park. Unfortunately, due to differences with the City Park and Playground Commission, the club completely removed the arena and left the park for good in 1977.

Fortunately, a group of horse lovers got together in 1990 and formed the present-day Chico Equestrian Association. Over the years, members have built a riding arena, a round pen, and a clubhouse on the Arena Way property. The club continues to maintain the structures and the surrounding



The Horse Arena in Middle Park hosts to a variety of equestrian events and serves as a staging area for trail rides in Bidwell Park. The facility is open to the public on Xx and SSS.

grounds, providing a great place for local horse people to park their horse trailers and head off for a ride through beautiful Bidwell Park.

For more information, please contact, Jeff Crawford, (530) 514 -9393, or visit CEA on the web at www.ChicoEquestrianAssociation.org.

Project Demonstrates New Techniques

PARK FEATURE NAMED: Peregrine Point



June 2010. The demo area was dominated with Yellow-star thistle prior to an herbicide application.

Replacing Yellow Star Thistle with Native Plants is the goal in 2.5 acres of Middle Park.



***Burn, Baby, Burn.** Parks Staff, the Chico Fire Department and CALFire conducted a training burn that prepared the site for a native grass planting.*



On November 29, 2010, the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission named the Highway 32 Trailhead and Disc Golf Course, the Peregrine Point Trailhead and Disc Golf Course. The name provides a distinctive identity for the site and is named for the Peregrine falcons that nest in the scenic rocky cliffs that overlook Upper Park.

We will report on the new Disc Golf Course status in the next newsletter.

**What's next in 2011?
Stay Tuned...**



***Native Grass Planting.** A "no-till drill" was used to plant the site between storms in a matter of hours.*

Answer to "Where is it?": High water just downstream of Bear Hole transforms this popular summer swimming spot into a treacherous winter cataraact.



Park Division
General Services Department

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