



Bidwell Park *Pulse*

Quarterly Newsletter of the City of Chico's Park Division

Prescribed Burning A Vegetation Management Tool

After a successful Fall prescribed burn, the Park Division is preparing for its second proposed burn in Middle Park. This is a continuation of an existing prescribed burn program, implemented in 1994 for Bidwell Park. Prescribed burning helps reduce invasive weeds and fuel loads, and prepares the site for native grass plantings, as well as provides important training for the City's personnel.

The practice of prescribed burning has been used in Bidwell Park for a number of years as a part of an ongoing effort to control non-native vegetation and reduce damages associated with uncontrolled wildland fires. Fire used as a management tool helps enhance and protect habitats by controlling or eliminating undesirable vegetation, thereby encouraging native plant growth. Several burns have taken place in the park since 1994 resulting in an apparent reduction of yellow starthistle as well as other invasive plants.

The specific objectives of this burn are to reduce the seed source for medusahead and yellow starthistle (YST). The burn timing will be critical: late enough after most of the native plants have set seed but before the targeted plants have released seed. These species rely on animals and people to spread and often the seed remains on the plants after it has matured. Medusahead stays green late in the year and spring burns can often consume the seed before it matures. The seed of the targeted plants is relatively short-lived and burning can be an effective control. The reduction in biomass may favor native plants in the next growing season. Yellow



Crews ignite a prescribed burn in Middle Park last Fall.

(Continued on page 2)

Middle Trail Work



The Middle Trail Rehabilitation project started back up in June and will continue throughout the summer. Last Fall 700 feet of the Middle Trail was rehabilitated, east of parking lot E above Day Camp. This month approximately 2,500 feet of trail, roughly between Parking Lots F and H (Day Camp), will be improved. This section of trail will be closed during that time.

The improvements are part of a \$175,802 California Department of Parks and Recreation grant. The project will incorporate a variety of sustainable trail design and building techniques to minimize resource damage and improve the trail experience. The result will be a sustainable-all weather trail that will help preserve the beauty and native habitat of Bidwell Park. Signs advising visitors of the project will be posted and park users are requested to use alternative routes to avoid the Middle Trail worksite. Detailed information is provided on the Parks Division webpage.

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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, Management Analyst.

Contact

Questions, comments, or photo contributions?

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Featured Cover Photograph

Captured by Photographer Robert Woodward, a Great Blue Heron stalks its prey at Horseshoe Lake. Robert, a local photographer and City employee has been featured in several galleries.

(Continued from page 1)

starthistle germination is stimulated by fires, and follow-up control in the following year can be very effective. As weather conditions this year favor annual grasses, this may be a very good opportunity to make some further gains in YST management.

The fall 2010 burn provided a good opportunity to reintroduce prescribed burning into Bidwell Park and demonstrated some of the benefits of this management tool. Staff as well as citizen comments were supportive of the effort.

Wildlife:**Spring Brings New Life**

Late spring and early summer treat us with spectacular opportunities to witness new life emerging all around our parks and greenways. Everything from tender grasses, beautiful wildflowers and infant wildlife are enjoying their first season in the world. As with all young beings, this time is dangerous because of the fragility of infancy.



Goslings enjoying the pond at the Bidwell Golf Course.

It is not uncommon to come across young wildlife in the spring and summer months. It is best to observe their activity from a distance. The parents of these delicate creatures do their best to keep them hidden. Storms, predators and curious human beings sometimes thwart the efforts of the nurturing parents and the younglings may be exposed to danger. People can be a great help to distressed animals but without proper knowledge can also put themselves and the animal at risk.



Juvenile Black Bear exploring in Upper Bidwell Park.

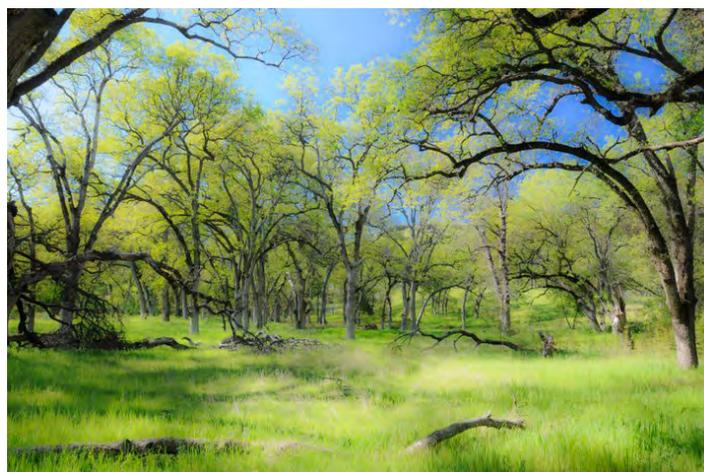
All too often people who see young wildlife and not the parents think the creature has been abandoned and needs to be saved. Chances are the parents are nearby. It is never a good idea to pick up a wild animal. Besides for potentially harming the animal, wildlife can transmit diseases to humans as well as inflict serious injury with their sharp teeth and claws.

If an animal does appear to be in need of aid there are resources available that can help. The Chico Police Department non-emergency phone line (897-4900) is

the best way to get attention to the bird or animal that may be in trouble. Chico police dispatchers will contact animal control officers or park rangers who are trained to assess wildlife situations.

There are many opportunities to observe wildlife in the natural environment of our Chico parks and greenways. Wild birds and animals are fascinating and should be treated with the respect they deserve. Give them space, move slowly, quietly and you will likely be rewarded with an insiders look at our incredible wildlife neighbors.

-Shane Romain, Park Ranger

Park Postcard:

"Where is it?" Summer camp for children was held here in conjunction with Chico State Teachers College.. Do you know where it is? Answer on p. 8.
(Photo Courtesy of Tom Barrett)

Wildlife:

Peregrine Falcons

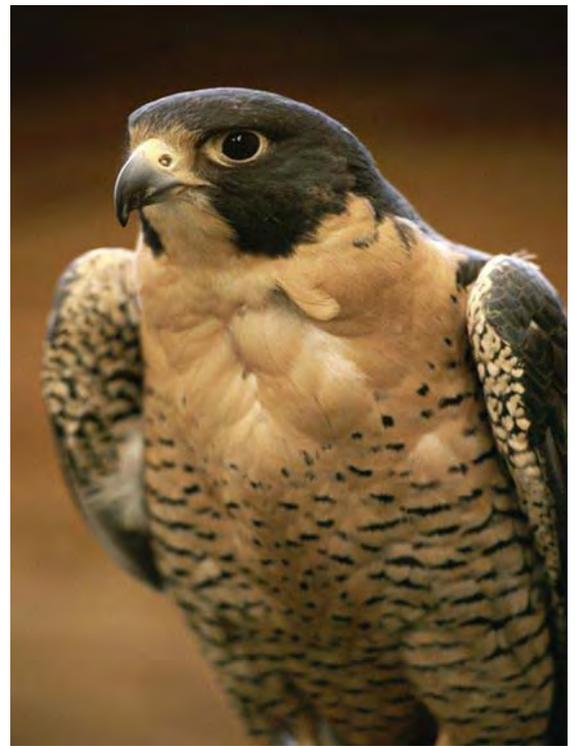
Bidwell Park is home to a wide array of species from mountain lion and bobcats to burrowing owls and rattlesnakes. One of the more fascinating animals to see in Bidwell Park is the Peregrine Falcon. These falcons are unique because of their historical importance and amazing flying ability.

The Peregrine Falcon was one of the first species to be listed as an endangered species by the Endangered Species Act. Exposure to a chemical called DDT caused Peregrine Falcon egg shells to become so brittle they would break when the adult falcon would sit on the nest. This caused a dramatic decrease in numbers and by the 1970s there were only a few nesting Peregrine Falcons in the state of California. The first step to recovery was the banning of DDT and captive breeding. Several non-profit groups were set up in the United States and California to reintroduce the falcons back into their habitat. By the 1990s, California had over a hundred nesting pairs of falcons. The success of captive breeding programs paid off and the Peregrine Falcon is no longer listed on the Endangered Species List.

Peregrine Falcons are remarkable hunters. A Peregrine Falcon hunts its prey from far above. When the moment is right it will tuck its wings in and dive towards its prey reaching speeds of over 200 miles per hour. Typical prey for a falcon includes small birds like jays, young ducks, and pigeons. Peregrine Falcons are also unique because of their wide range. It has the second largest range of any bird and lives on every continent except for Antarctica. This may be how it got its name; peregrine in Latin means wanderer.

Peregrine Falcons are identified as having blue-grey feathers on their back and wings. The chest is white with brown bands across the torso and legs. A unique identifying feature on the head is a single black line of feathers going down from the eyes. The Kestrel which can often be confused as a falcon has two solid bars coming down from the eyes. When alarmed you may here its call of “kak kak kak.”

Peregrine Falcons have a substantial range and can be seen flying above Bidwell Park. Falcons are relatively human tolerant, and have been known to nest under bridges and on tall buildings. And have been observed nesting along bridges around Lake Oroville and cliffs in Butte Creek Canyon.



The cliffs in Upper Park may offer suitable habitat for Peregrine Falcons nests, but it is not known at this time whether the pair of Peregrine Falcons in Upper Park are nesting on the cliffs. The City of Chico, local Audubon society, as well as others, are monitoring the Falcons.

The story of the Peregrine Falcon is one that will go down in history as a success. Their populations continue to grow and thrive. Look to the skies as you hike in Bidwell Park and you may just catch a glimpse of this amazing bird.

-Andrew Verbrugge, Park Ranger

Peregrine Falcons are often seen in Upper Bidwell Park.

Oak Trees Part 1:

Oak Trees of Bidwell Park

There are several species of oak tree in Bidwell Park. Can you name and identify all of them? Over the next several newsletters, we will present information on the main varieties of oaks in the Park, and we will have a quiz at the end of the series!

There are 16 endemic oak species in California, which means that their range is solely in California. There are at least two other species that are also found outside the state. Oaks, of the genus *Quercus*, are divided into two groups: red oaks and white oaks. The white oaks have rounded leaves and annual acorn crops. The Red oaks have spines at the ends of the leaves and biannual acorn crops - where it takes two years for the acorn to develop.

The most prolific group in Bidwell Park are the white oaks - they consist of our large valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*) and the common blue oak (*Q. douglassii*) of the foothills. Both are deciduous, dropping their leaves in winter.

The Valley oak is the largest of our oaks, reaching over 100 feet tall and up to about 4 to 5 feet in diameter in the park. The canopy can spread almost as wide, although in a forest setting, they tend to stay narrower - only in open grown trees do the branches spread to great distances. One example of this was the famed Hooker Oak, which in 1921 was reported to be over 110 ft (34 m) tall and 29 feet (8.8 m) in circumference eight feet (2.4 m) from the ground. The largest branch measured 111 feet (33.6 m) from trunk to tip and the circumference of outside branches was nearly five hundred feet (150 m). Its age had been estimated at a thousand years, but on its demise it was found to be two trees, of 325 years each which had long ago grown into one.

We are lucky to have hundreds of old growth valley oaks in lower park and the Chico area. They are considered a riparian species because they are found growing along the Sacramento river and its tributaries. However, they can grow far from the



A Valley oak tree in Lower Bidwell Park.

creeks in some areas - in part because the creeks and rivers used to flood and spread out much farther than they do today, and in part because in the valley floors, the water tables are relatively shallow. Jepson describes the valley oak as being found in all low lying areas and valleys of California except those directly facing the ocean and where ground water is no deeper than 30 feet.

The settlers of California knew that Valley oaks grew in deep rich soils, so many were cut to make way for fields of cotton or rice. Thankfully, many of the farmers also revered the trees and left at least a few of them scattered about those same fields. An excellent example of this can be seen at the Patrick Ranch south of town, where several old veteran trees remain today.

Many species of wildlife and insects depend on the valley oak for food and shelter. The acorn woodpecker, red shouldered hawk, oak titmouse, deer and cynipid gall wasps are only a few of the creatures we see associated with the oaks.

Jepson, Willis L. 1910. *Silva of California*. Memoirs of the University of California, Volume 2. Berkeley, the University Press.

-Denice Britton, Urban Forest Manager



The lobed leaf of a Valley oak tree.

Invasive Plant Profile:

Japanese Privets, Major Invasive Weed!

Common name: Japanese privet

Scientific name: *Ligustrum japonicum*

Family: *Oleaceae*

Native to: East Asia

Means of Introduction: Ornamental, border and hedge plant.

Current CA Distribution: Varied

Status/Weed Rating:

Statewide impact: **not listed** (CAL-IPC);

CDEA Noxious Weed List: **not listed** [CDEA Weeds 2010]

What does it look like? General: Commonly used for hedges and topiaries. Japanese privet has a compact form used for topiary and low hedges.

Leaves: Somewhat waxy texture, glossy, darker green in color, is softer with an almost 'spongy' feel; has a two toned appearance, darker green above and grey green on the underside. May grow as tall as 15'+; is considered evergreen.

Flowers: Small creamy white and in terminal clusters. Their aroma is light, and not always pleasant.

Fruit: Appears after flower on the same drooping terminal clusters; Black, and ¼" diameter and round.

Reproduction and Dispersal: Birds eat the fruit and disperse the seeds, vehicles and people also inadvertently help it spread.

Where is it found invading? In all areas of Chico, it is of special concern in Bidwell Parks' native habitat areas.

Why worry? Japanese privet is a prolific plant that rapidly

overtakes areas normally inhabited with native or less aggressive species.

How can it be managed? Consistent seasonal mowing and cutting can help control the spread. Complete removal of plant including the entire root system, or cutting and direct herbicide treatment to stump.

What is being done in Bidwell Park? In lower Bidwell Park the Park Division in conjunction with Friends of Bidwell Park is manually removing smaller trees, and digging out and removing the root balls in entirety. FOBP has logged thousands of hours in privet removal to date.

Where do I go for more information?

<http://www.invasive.org/eastern/midatlantic/ligu.html>
<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/shrub/ligspp/all.html>

References: Author: M. A. Dirr *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants 5th Edition; 1998* Publisher: Stipes Publishing L.L.C. Champaign Ill. ISBN 0-87563-795-7; USDA, NRCS. 2010. The PLANTS Database (<http://plants.usda.gov>, 2 December 2010). National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490

Web: USDA, NRCS. 2010. The PLANTS Database (<http://plants.usda.gov>, 2 December 2010). National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA.; <http://search.freefind.com/find.html?id=92137308&pageid=r&mode=ALL&n=0&charset=windows-1252&bcd=%F7&query=ligustrum+vulgare>

Trees:

Burned Sycamore Requires Removal

On Sunday night, April 24, the Street Tree Field Supervisor received an urgent call from the Fire Department requesting his assistance in putting out a fire in a sycamore tree just up stream from Sycamore Pool at One Mile. The tree was quite large and someone had left a camp fire burning in the tree. The inside of the tree, which had a large amount of dead, dry wood in it, was quickly engulfed in flames that were shooting out the trunk at about 30 feet in the air.

Due to the tree's structure, it could not safely be removed at that time to help extinguish the fire. On Monday morning, Dan Efseaff and Denice Britton, along with the Parks and Street Tree Supervisors, examined the tree and determined that at that time it was safe enough to leave in place. The decision was made to monitor the tree,



hoping the fire was extinguished and the tree could be saved.

By Tuesday morning, though, it was evident that the fire was continuing to smolder and was potentially entering the tree's roots. Due to the continued fire hazard and the more urgent safety concerns of the tree collapsing, Denice Britton, decided to remove the tree.

Staff reluctantly authorized the emergency removal of the tree. It was over 100 feet tall and over 5 feet in diameter. As a result of the fire, the sound wood was less than an inch thick, so that it could have easily failed in a strong wind once the leaves matured.

It is sad to think that the tree could have lived for many more years, and been a beautiful asset to the park had it not been for this careless act.

-Denice Britton, Urban Forest Manager

Annual Event:

Earth Day in Bidwell Park & Greenways

Cool, mild weather prevailed on April 23 as the City of Chico celebrated Earth Day in Bidwell Park & Greenways. Over 245 volunteers worked in the Cedar Grove/World of Trees vicinity with trash cleanups under several Lindo Channel bridges and along Big Chico Creek. Volunteers removed exotic, invasive weeds from 13 sites, cleaned trash from the creek, planted native plants, sealed all the viewing stations along the World of Trees Trail and straightened up the Chico Nature Center property.



Pi Kappa Alpha sealed the viewing stations and donated sealant.



Father and daughter team up to weed around baby oaks.

CSU, Chico's Inter-Fraternal Council had 10 fraternities represented. Other organizations included: AS Community Action Volunteers in Education, AS Sustainability, Butte College Connections, 2 Butte College Communication classes; Girls Scouts; Alpha Gamma Rho (Agric Fraternity); Paradise High School; Starbucks; Friends of Bidwell Park; Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance; and The Stream Team. The Park Division with the help of volunteer team leaders and the CA Conservation Corps guided community volunteers. *A Big Thank You to all who came and helped in Bidwell Park!*



CAVE & Sigma Nu students led by Pam and Steve.



Early registration helped reduce the wait to work!

-Lise Smith-Peters, Volunteer Coordinator

Many Thanks to Our Event Contributors: Starbucks Coffee, Lundberg Family Farms, The Home Depot, Recology Zero Waste and Waste Management.

Volunteer:

CSU, Chico Park Intern's Experience

Working with the Park Division for the City of Chico has been quite an experience. With California's budget issues trickling all the way down to local levels, daily operations have been strained quite a bit. Having the entire Bidwell Park; both Upper and Lower to maintain is a never ending task. While the Park Division does have twenty two personnel, that includes all the support staff, Rangers and office folks as well. As far as maintenance people actually in the field that number is only six.

Divided into six "areas", Bidwell Park has an array of topography and natural features. Visitors to the park can take a leisurely dip in the Sycamore Pool in the Lower Park; or if feeling a bit more adventurous, there's the thrill of Upper Park's popular swimming spots, with names such as Bear Hole and Salmon Hole.

Programming is not the focus of this department. However, services are what they do have plenty of. During my short six weeks with the team, I have seen more of the park than I knew existed. This extremely small, yet dedicated group of professionals has an almost overwhelming task to perform. The expression "There's more work than could ever be finished" is an understatement. With thousands of acres to care for, picking and choosing work list items is essential.

Trails, paths, roads, bridges, picnic areas, benches, BBQs,

play sets, fencing, signage, bathrooms, changing areas, nature areas, protected restorations, as well as, thousands of visitors; this is just a fraction of what I could think of as far as "services provided". Also, being the most visible of the park employees; maintenance workers in the park are often the public's only contact with the professionals charged with its care and feeding. I mention this due to the "double edge sword" nature of these interactions. I've had folks fall down over themselves thanking us for all the work we do to maintain Bidwell for everyone to enjoy. However, there is the flip side to this situation. Occasionally community citizens will challenge crew members on what they are doing.

Without all the facts; people will sometimes challenge projects, such as invasive species removal, as an assault on nature. With this in mind, public education and outreach are issues of importance to all park employees.



Chris installing an irrigation system for the native plant nursery work area that he also fabricated as part of his internship.

-Intern Chris Morris, CSUC Dept. of Recreation & Parks Mgmt Major

Partner Profile:

Park Watch



Park Watch volunteers staffing a booth at the Annual Snow Goose Festival.

Perhaps during a visit to Bidwell Park you may have encountered a person in a green shirt with big yellow letters spelling out the words Park Watch and wondered who they were. Park Watch is the City of Chico Park Divisions longest running organized volunteer program. Since 1994 Park Watchers have been dedicated to helping ensure that our city's parks and greenways are safe, beautiful places to visit.

Park Watch is made up of an enthusiastic group of volunteers who enjoy spending their time in the parks of Chico. While Park Watching, members enjoy their favorite activities such as walking, biking, running, horseback riding or relaxing at a favorite spot. The idea of Park Watch is to be highly visible to visitors in the park.

Park Watch volunteers are a great resource for information about Bidwell Park and other areas around Chico. If a park visitor is in need of directions or general assistance, Park Watch is there to help. Besides being a resource to park visitors, Park Watchers are valuable helping hands, eyes and ears to park staff.

Park Watchers carefully observe activities and conditions in our parks and greenways. They provide information to park staff about potential hazards, unsafe conduct, graffiti, wildlife activity and many other types of situations that may encounter. Park Watch volunteers also get involved with special events, controlled burns, the Chico Creek Nature Center, as well as assist with monitoring and surveys.

Park Watch is an ever growing and dynamic family of incredible members of the community. If you spend at least 4 hours a month in the park, would like to add a little something to your experience and contribute to your favorite Park at the same time; contact Park Ranger Shane Romain at 530-896-7834 or email parkwatch@ci.chico.ca.us

-Shane Romain, Park Ranger



Park Watch member Fred Sherman riding his recumbent bike.

Volunteer:

Intern Leads Volunteers



We say a sad goodbye to Park Intern Monique Silva-Crossman, who for the last year has led weekly volunteer sessions, guided the Upward Bound Summer High School Program, helped with major event logistics, and designed and compiled native plant information for the Sycamore Restoration Site Walking Tour brochure. Monique graduated in May with a BS in Environmental Science. She will travel this summer and has applied for several jobs that involve teaching environmental education to children. Monique was also a leader in the sustainability movement on the CSU, Chico campus. Her spirit and energy will be missed!

Partnership:

CA Conservation Corps in Bidwell Park

Over the last few months, Bidwell Park and City greenway users have seen a crew of young people working as part of a new partnership between the City of Chico Park Division and the local California Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCCs received a Proposition 84 (*Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006*) grant to partner with the Park Division. The focus is on work training and restoration of the Big Chico Creek watershed. The program provides one or more CCC crew(s) for 1-2 weeks a month for helping with Park projects, including Spanish broom removal in Upper Bidwell Park, trimming vegetation from along trails and roads, supporting park restoration efforts and training with Chico's park and fire department staff on a controlled burn for weed management. The CCC crew is currently working alongside our Park trail crew on the Middle Trail project (page 1). The Park Division provides supervision, projects and training to the CCC.



Park Reservations in Full Swing

Bidwell Park, one of the largest municipal parks in the country, offers a safe, picturesque environment for a variety of public and private events.

City parks are a popular venue for many community events as well private festivities. Chico has numerous reservation areas available for use, both in Bidwell Park and at our specialty parks. Reservation areas are in high demand during the recreation season, thus we recommend that a park use application along with the applicable fees be submitted to the park division in order to secure a spot for your event.

For small, private events, your application should be submitted at least 2 days in advance, but we recommend several weeks beforehand to guarantee a spot. For large or public events that require insurance, an application must be submitted at least 57 days in advance in order to ensure adequate time for processing and approval. Some events undergo review by the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission.

For more information please contact the Park office at 530-896-7800 or see our website at: www.ci.chico.ca.us

-Theresa Rodriguez, City of Chico



POLICE • COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**TUESDAY
AUGUST 2, 2011
6:00-9:00 PM
One Mile Recreation Area
Bidwell Park**

On Tuesday, August 2nd, neighborhoods throughout Chico are being invited to join forces with thousands of communities for the 28th Annual National Night Out crime and drug prevention event. Please join the General Services and Police Departments at the Caper Acres playground to show your support and participate in this special event. For additional information, please contact the Park Division at 530-896-7800.

Answer to "Where is it?": This location is about a third of a mile east of the Upper Park Power lines. Also, known as Day Camp and was home to an archery range started in the 1940s. (Photo courtesy of Tom Barrett).



Park Division
General Services Department

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