

City of Chico Vegetative Fuels Management Plan Draft Programmatic EIR

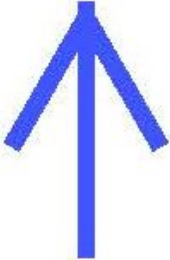


Wolfy Rouble, Butte County Resource Conservation District

Phase 1: VFMP



Phase 2: CEQA



You are here
(December 2020)

What is a programmatic EIR (PEIR)?

- Different from a Project EIR: less detail
- Analyzes impacts of a program without specifying every detail of every project
- Relies on “standard project requirements” that will be incorporated into every future activity
- Intended to be supplemented by further environmental review - -
- - - But, future environmental review need only analyze aspects not covered in original PEIR

What is a programmatic EIR (PEIR)? *Continued*

Relies on SPRs (standard project requirements) that will be incorporated into every future activity.

SPRs are a concept developed by CAL FIRE for its statewide vegetation treatment PEIR...
...And used by other regional PEIRs that support similar goals

All SPRs are in Appendix C

SPRs for the VFMP PEIR were developed by a team of subject matter experts including Parks staff, IPM expert, Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve registered professional forester, wildlife biologist, botanist, Deer Creek Resources, with consultation from Mechoopda Tribe, NRCS, Butte County Fire Safe Council, others

Makes it easy for future Parks managers and other project proponents to design effective, low-impact projects without starting from scratch on environmental review each time

Examples of an SPR:

SPR HYDRO-3: Erosion Monitoring. The project implementer will inspect treatment areas for the proper implementation of erosion control SPRs and mitigations before the rainy season. The implementer shall re-inspect the treatment area after the first large winter storm event of the season (i.e., ≥ 1.5 inches in 24 hours) and/or at least once annually, to evaluate the function of erosion control measures. Any area of erosion that will result in substantial sediment discharge will be remediated. This SPR applies to mechanical and understory burning treatment methods.

Applies to treatment types: Machine work; prescribed fire. **Applies to vegetation communities:** All.

SPR HYDRO-4: Minimize Burn Pile Size and Observe Setbacks from Trees. The project implementer will not create burn piles that exceed 4 feet in length, width, or diameter. In addition, burn piles will not occupy more than 15 percent of the total treatment area. Burn piles shall be at least 4' from any living tree, to avoid cooking the tree's tissues with the heat of the fire.

Applies to treatment types: Hand work, machine work (when piling); prescribed fire. **Applies to vegetation communities:** All.

What is a programmatic EIR (PEIR)? *Continued*

- Intended to be supplemented by further environmental review - -
- - - But, future environmental review need only analyze aspects not covered in original PEIR

Parks managers will fill out the “Project Consistency Checklist” (*Appendix A*) to analyze each future project/activity. If it is within the scope of the PEIR (based on surveys, studies, etc), no additional environmental document is needed and project can start. (If it’s not within PEIR scope, new document is needed, e.g. ND/MND/EIR.)

Any other project proponent can also use this same Checklist (under supervision of Parks): e.g. Fire Safe Councils, local volunteer groups, funders, etc. Increases City’s ability to partner with community groups to get more done

What's in this PEIR?

Main document: Analyzes impacts of implementing the VFMP program, summarizes SPRs and any needed mitigations.

Appendix A: Project Consistency Checklist.

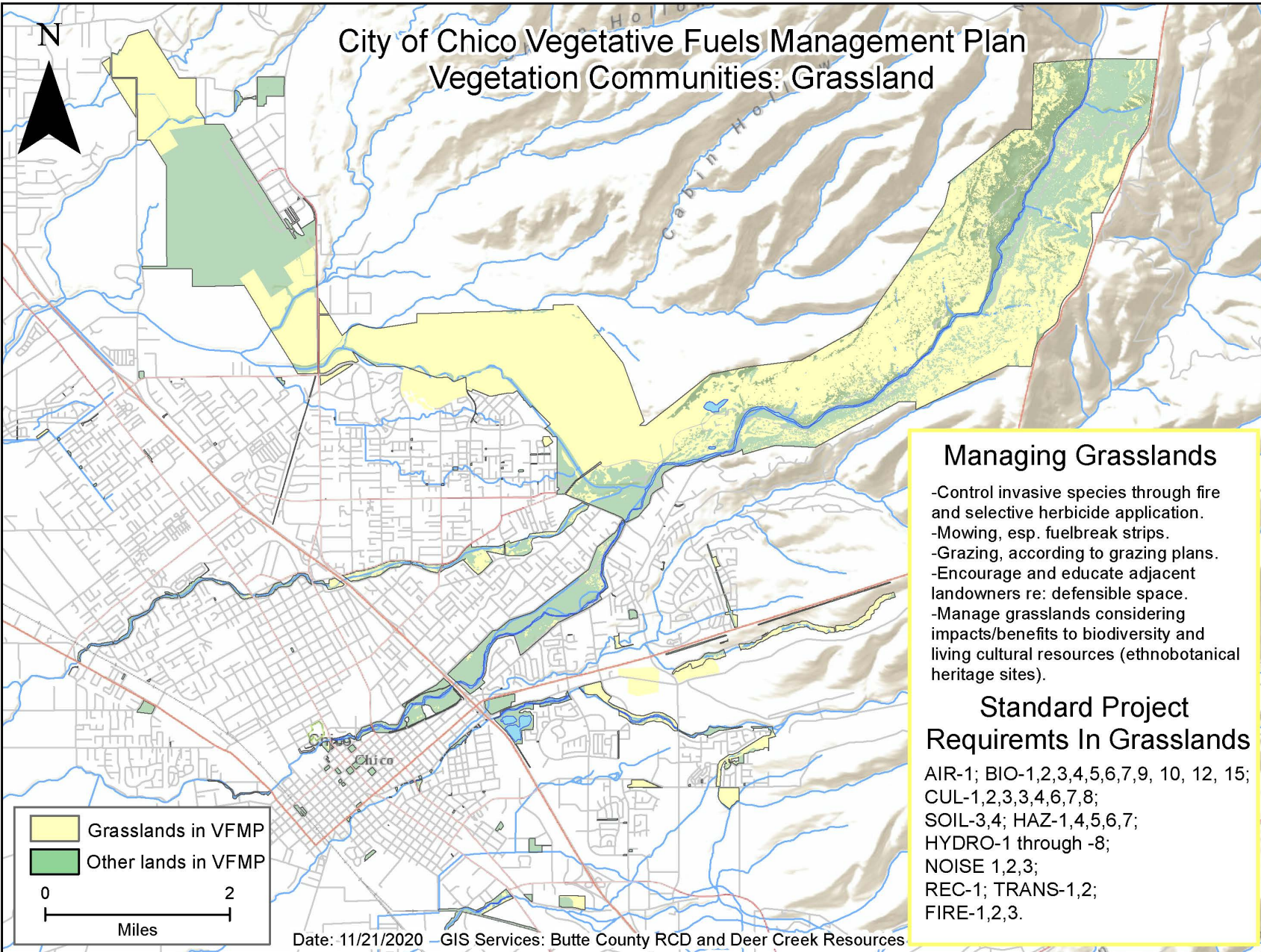
Appendix B: The VFMP (this redline version incorporates comments since 8/31/20 and is the version the PEIR is based on).

Appendix C: All the SPRs. (This appendix has no new information beyond what's in the PEIR; it's just collected for easy viewing in one place).

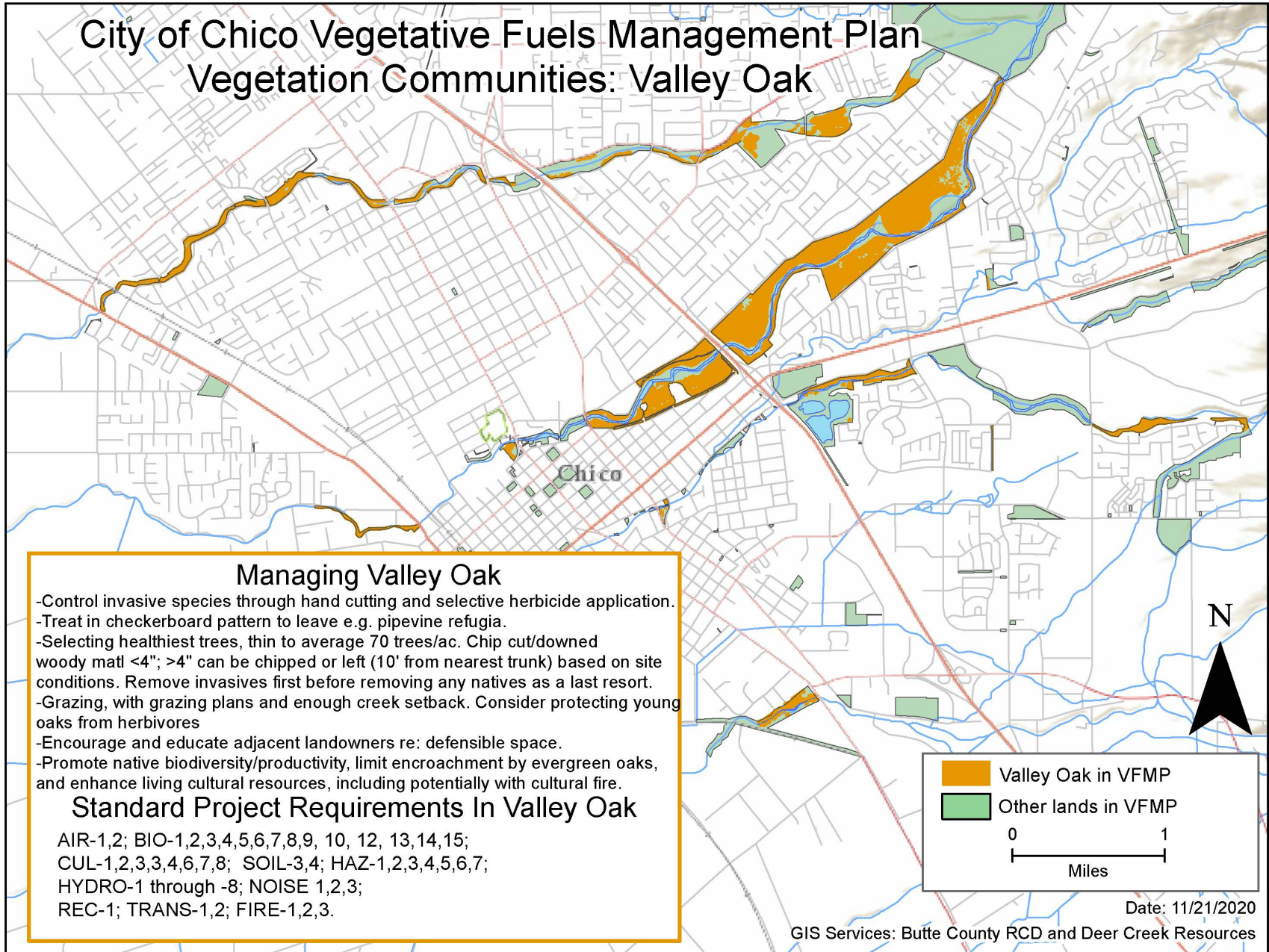
Appendix D: Maps and tables that support the PEIR but were too big to fit in it

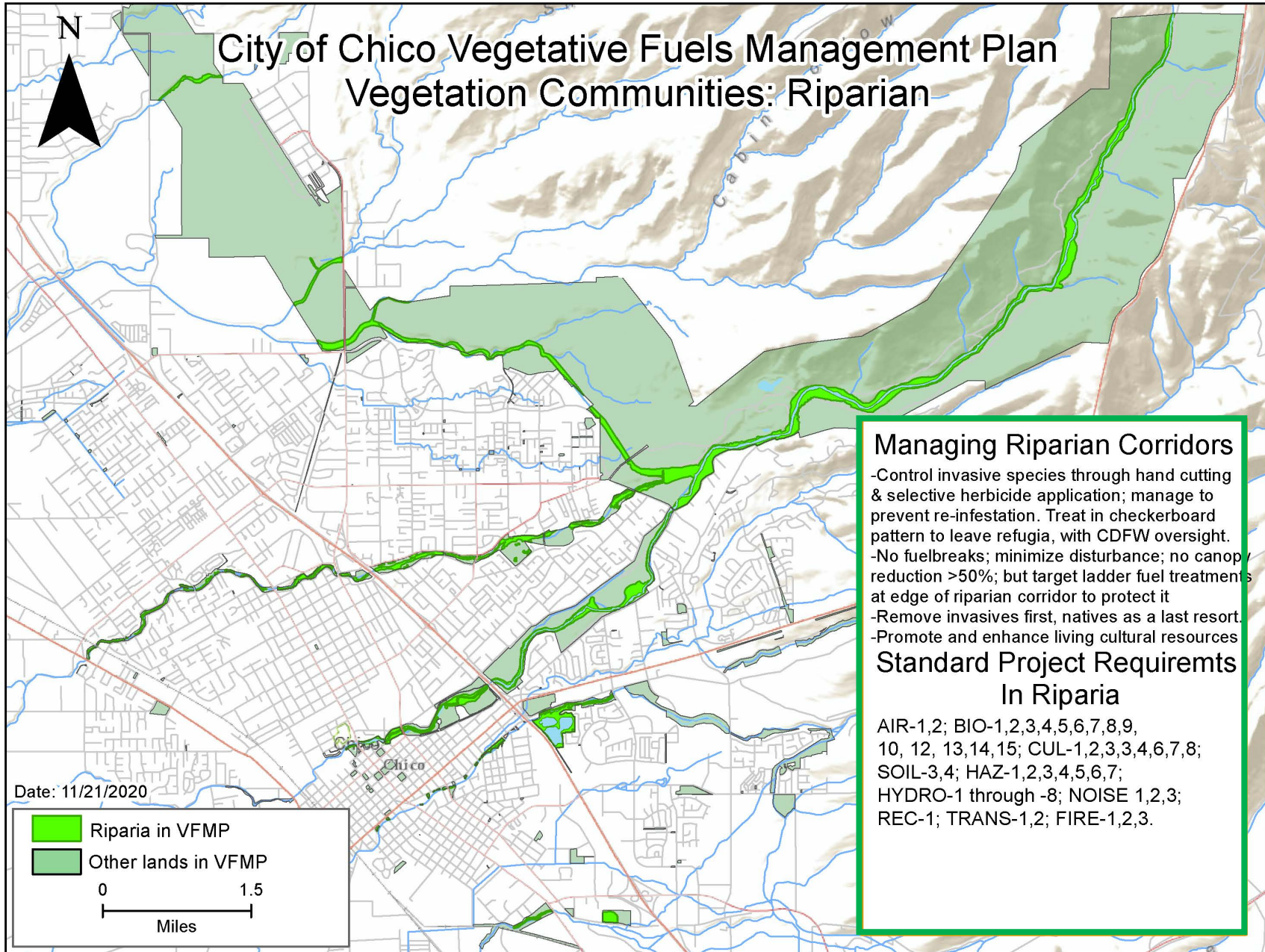
Appendix E: Selected high-priority invasive species and some methods of treating them.

City of Chico Vegetative Fuels Management Plan Vegetation Communities: Grassland



City of Chico Vegetative Fuels Management Plan Vegetation Communities: Valley Oak





City of Chico Vegetative Fuels Management Plan

Vegetation Communities: Riparian

Date: 11/21/2020

Riparia in VFMP
 Other lands in VFMP

0 ————— 1.5
 |—————|
 Miles

Managing Riparian Corridors

- Control invasive species through hand cutting & selective herbicide application; manage to prevent re-infestation. Treat in checkerboard pattern to leave refugia, with CDFW oversight.
- No fuelbreaks; minimize disturbance; no canopy reduction >50%; but target ladder fuel treatments at edge of riparian corridor to protect it
- Remove invasives first, natives as a last resort.
- Promote and enhance living cultural resources

Standard Project Requirements In Riparia

AIR-1,2; BIO-1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9, 10, 12, 13,14,15; CUL-1,2,3,3,4,6,7,8; SOIL-3,4; HAZ-1,2,3,4,5,6,7; HYDRO-1 through -8; NOISE 1,2,3; REC-1; TRANS-1,2; FIRE-1,2,3.

City of Chico Vegetative Fuels Management Plan

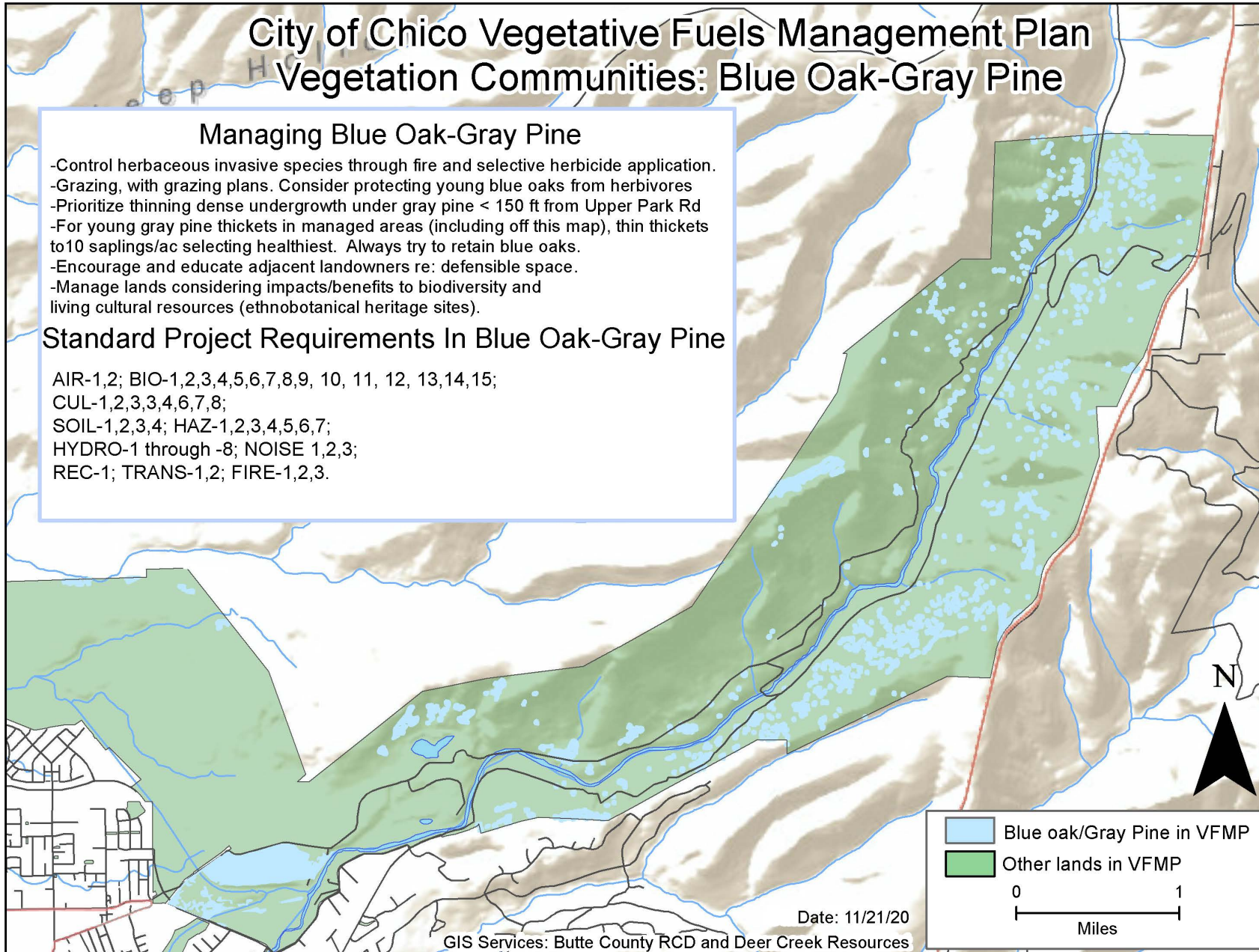
Vegetation Communities: Blue Oak-Gray Pine

Managing Blue Oak-Gray Pine

- Control herbaceous invasive species through fire and selective herbicide application.
- Grazing, with grazing plans. Consider protecting young blue oaks from herbivores
- Prioritize thinning dense undergrowth under gray pine < 150 ft from Upper Park Rd
- For young gray pine thickets in managed areas (including off this map), thin thickets to 10 saplings/ac selecting healthiest. Always try to retain blue oaks.
- Encourage and educate adjacent landowners re: defensible space.
- Manage lands considering impacts/benefits to biodiversity and living cultural resources (ethnobotanical heritage sites).

Standard Project Requirements In Blue Oak-Gray Pine

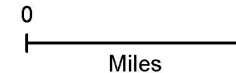
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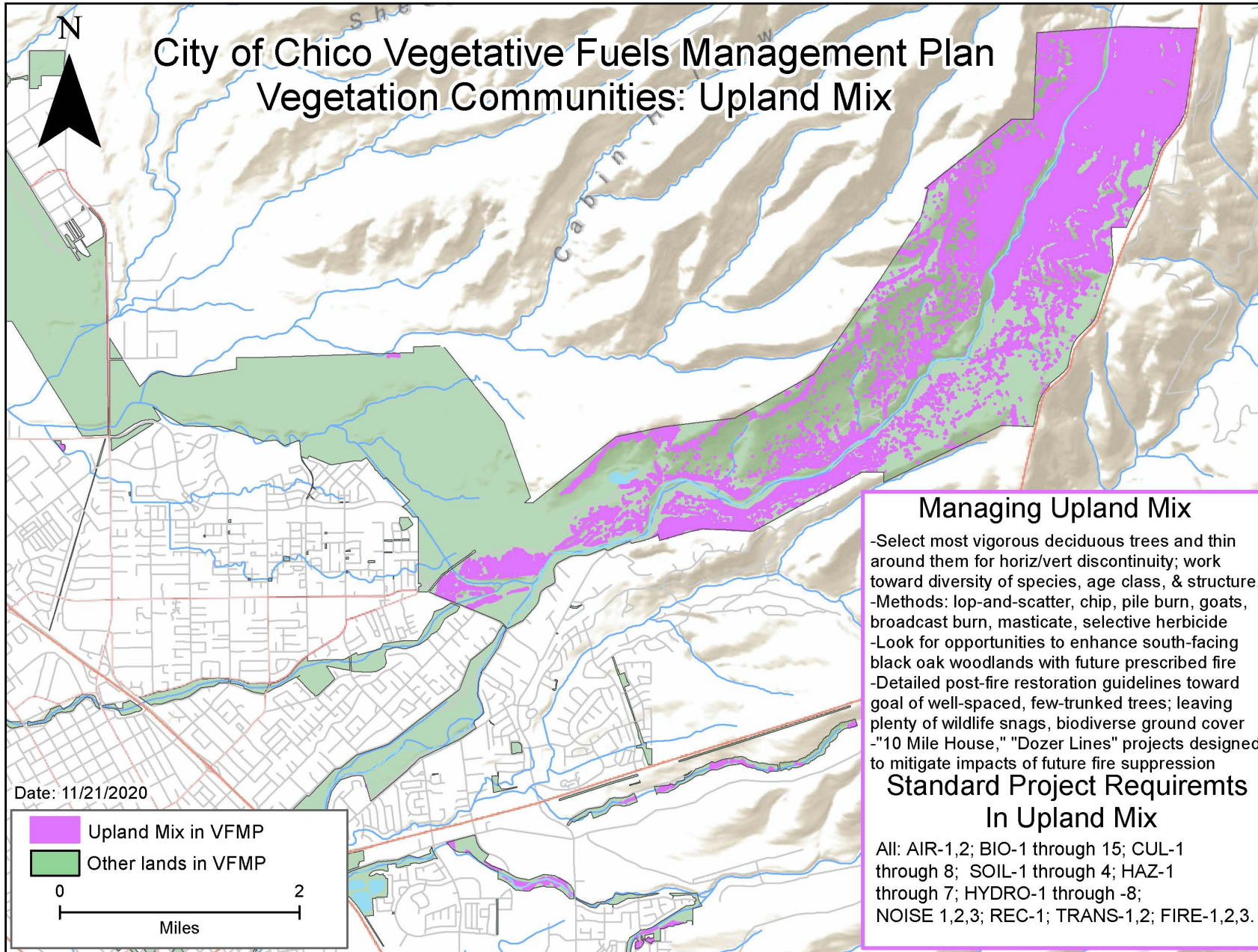
Date: 11/21/20

GIS Services: Butte County RCD and Deer Creek Resources

- Blue oak/Gray Pine in VFMP
- Other lands in VFMP



City of Chico Vegetative Fuels Management Plan Vegetation Communities: Upland Mix



What we found:

- No impacts identified that are still significant after mitigation
- 2 potentially significant impacts, however, the City can mitigate them to below a level of significance:

(1) Potential harm to special-status species (MM-BIO-1)

and

(2) Potential water quality impacts from possible creek bank collapse if City removes a lot of Arundo but doesn't replace it with anything (MM-HYDRO-2).

Mitigation measures:

MM-BIO-1: Establishes a framework for compensatory mitigation that future projects can use and stay within the scope of this PEIR

MM-HYDRO-1: Establishes a framework for planting willow into dead Arundo rootballs to reduce likelihood of bank collapse (also helps creekbank resist re-infestation by invasive weeds).

<p style="text-align: center;">Key to Impact Levels NI = No Impact LTS = Less than significant PS = Potentially significant LTSM = Less than significant with Mitigation SU = Significant and unavoidable</p>			
4.4 Biological Resources			
Impact	Significance Before Mitigation	Mitigation Measure	Significance After Mitigation
<p>Impact BIO-a: Project activities could have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, or through cumulative impacts, on a <i>wildlife</i> species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.</p>	<p>PS</p>	<p>Mitigation Measure BIO-1a: <i>Compensatory Mitigation to Special-Status Wildlife, If Applicable</i> If the provisions of SPR BIO-5a cannot be implemented and additional mitigation is necessary to reduce significant impacts, the project proponent will compensate for such impacts to species or habitat by acquiring and/or protecting land that provides (or will provide in the case of restoration) habitat function for affected species that is at least equivalent to the habitat function removed or degraded as a result of the treatment. Compensation may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Preserving existing habitat outside of the treatment area in perpetuity; this may entail purchasing mitigation credits and/or lands from a CDFW- or USFWS-approved entity in sufficient quantity to offset the residual significant impacts, generally at a ratio of 1:1 for habitat; and/or 2.) Restoring or enhancing existing habitat within the treatment area or outside of the treatment area (including decommissioning roads, adding perching structures, removing existing perching structures, or removing existing movement barriers or other existing features that are adversely affecting the species), and/or 3.) In lieu of the measures described above, compensatory mitigation may be satisfied through compliance with permit conditions, or other authorizations obtained by the project proponent (e.g., incidental take permit, if required), if these requirements are equally or more effective than the mitigation identified above. <p>The project proponent will prepare a Compensatory Mitigation Plan that identifies the residual significant effects that require compensatory mitigation and describes the compensatory mitigation strategy being implemented to reduce residual effects. The project proponent will consult with CDFW and/or any other applicable responsible agency prior to finalizing the Compensatory Mitigation Plan in order to satisfy that responsible agency's requirements (e.g., permits, approvals) within the plan. For species listed under ESA or CESA, the project proponent will submit the mitigation plan to CDFW and/or USFWS for review and comment. For other special-status wildlife species (not listed under ESA or CESA) the project proponent may consult with CDFW and/or USFWS regarding the availability and applicability of compensatory mitigation and other related technical information. The Compensatory Mitigation Plan will include:</p> <p>For preserving existing habitat outside of the treatment area in perpetuity, a summary of the proposed compensation lands (e.g., the number and type of credits, location of mitigation bank or easement), parties responsible for the long-term management of the land, and the legal and funding mechanisms for long-term conservation (e.g., holder of conservation easement or fee title). The project proponent will submit evidence that the necessary mitigation has been implemented or that the project proponent has entered into a legal agreement to implement it and that compensatory habitat will be preserved in perpetuity.</p> <p>For restoring or enhancing habitat within the treatment area or outside of the treatment area, a description of the proposed habitat improvements, success criteria that demonstrate the performance standard of maintained habitat function has been met, legal and funding mechanisms, and parties responsible for long-term management and monitoring of the restored habitat. If the loss of occupied habitat cannot be offset, and as a result treatment activities would substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of listed wildlife species, then the treatment will not qualify as within the scope of this PEIR.</p>	<p>LTSM</p>

4.10 Hydrological Resources

<p>Impact HYDRO-j: Project activities could cause hydrological adverse impacts or impacts to water quality through bank instability if they remove all the vegetation in a given streambank area, e.g. for <i>Arundo donax</i> removal projects.</p>	<p>PS</p>	<p>Mitigation Measure HYDRO-1: <i>Replant Native Vegetation into Arundo Root Balls</i> . To mitigate for Impact HYDRO-j, after Little Chico Creek Arundo Eradication (key project # 6) the City shall plant or cause to be planted native willow and other native vegetation along portions of Little Chico Creek where arundo was formerly the dominant vegetation. Native plants can be planted directly into the arundo root ball and should be planted at densities and protocols established in the region as best practices for creeks similar to Little Chico Creek in elevation, hydromorphology, and flow regime. Because streamside work needs to be carried out under the terms of a 1600 permit from CDFW (SPR BIO-10) as well as potentially an encroachment permit from CVFPB (if required), this mitigation measure would still need to be reviewed by CDFW and potentially CVFPB to ensure it adequately mitigates for this potentially significant impact. If CDFW and/or CVFPB stipulated more stringent mitigation under the terms of its/their permit(s), that more stringent mitigation would be applied.</p>	<p>LTSM</p>
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What comes next?

- Public and agencies have 45 days, starting Wednesday, to review the PEIR and make comments. (Deadline: Feb 1)
- Holding a public hearing during this time is optional (§15087(i))
- City and consultants will prepare a final EIR responding to all comments received
- If *new significant environmental impacts* are identified, and City cannot/will not mitigate these to below a level of significance, then EIR must be recirculated (new 45-day period)
- Otherwise, final EIR can be prepared, recommended for certification by BPPC, and certified by City Council.
- Grant ends March 15, 2021 so it would be ideal to certify the EIR before then*

* If appropriate, of course – i.e., if no new significant information is identified during comment period