
Bidwell Ranch Conservation/Mitigation Bank Project Summary

Date March 28, 2007

Project Overview

In fall 2006, River Partners began working with the City of Chico to develop a conservation and mitigation bank on the Bidwell Ranch property. River Partners will review and compile the technical information and produce the documents necessary to establish the Bank. Ultimately, the City of Chico will decide whether to move forward with the mitigation bank. River Partners and the City will work with the regulatory agencies to gain approval of the bank. A Conservation and Mitigation Bank on Bidwell Ranch may provide a mechanism to protect natural resources on site, ease regulatory burdens on infrastructure and private development projects, and pay for the long-term management of the site. Public participation is an important part of the project and citizens may join the email list for the project or join the Citizen Work Group to provide input. As part of the project, public access and recreational activities will be identified that are consistent with the site as a Conservation and Mitigation Bank.

Conservation and Mitigation Banks

A conservation or mitigation bank is land managed for its natural resource values. In exchange for permanently protecting the land, the bank operator may sell habitat credits to developers who need to satisfy legal requirements for compensating environmental impacts of development projects. Conservation banks must be approved by the wildlife agencies, such as the Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Mitigation banks are generally approved by the wildlife agencies and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Products and Outcomes of the Project

River Partners goal is to provide the City with information about the site's potential as a mitigation bank and complete the necessary mitigation documents. Ultimately, the City will determine whether creating the mitigation and conservation bank makes sense for the community and if to move forward with the agreements. If the City decides to move forward, the project will develop the necessary documentation, regulatory approvals, and management guidelines to establish the bank.

Potential Species of interest

The preliminary list of species that may be protected under the bank:

- Adobe Lily (*Fritillaria pluriflora*)
- Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)
- Butte County Checkerbloom (*Sidalcea robusta*)
- Butte County Meadowfoam (*Limnanthes floccosa* ssp. *californica*)
- Conservancy Fairy Shrimp (*Branchinecta conservatio*)
- Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)
- Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle (*Desmocerus californicus dimorphus*)
- Vernal Pool Fairy Shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*)
- Vernal Pool Tadpole Shrimp (*Lepidurus packardii*)
- Western Spadefoot Toad (*Spea hammondi*)

Public Participation

Cooperation is an important component of the project. The public may participate in the project in two main ways:

- **Join the email list**- the email list will provide announcements and updates. We always welcome public input or questions.
- **Serve on the Citizen Work Group** –The Citizen Group serves an advisory role on the development of the Bidwell Ranch Site as a mitigation and conservation bank.

We hope to engage a diverse representation of the community and so no previous expertise is required. Please contact River Partners to receive more information about the workgroup. To learn more about the project please visit our webpage at www.riverpartners.org.

Project Description

Project duration: Fall 2006 to Fall 2008

- Key Milestones
1. Review existing documents (surveys, title, previous biological assessments, maps and photographs, cultural resources, Environmental Assessments, and potential prescriptive rights and easements).
 2. Establish Citizen Work Group to provide input on the project approach and review key documents.
 3. Complete and distribute a Project Prospectus to the appropriate regulatory agencies.
 4. Complete and submit a Site Inventory and Preliminary Mitigation Proposal
 5. Develop a Management Plan and Mitigation Bank Enabling Instrument (MBEI).
 6. Prepare and record a conservation agreement.
 7. Establish the mechanism for the endowment account with the appropriate entity.

Type of Activity Establish a mitigation and conservation bank on the Bidwell Ranch Property. Potential species of interest include: Vernal Pool Tadpole Shrimp Butte County Checker bloom, Western spadefoot toad, Butte County Meadow foam, Vernal Pool Fairy Shrimp, Adobe lily, and Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle.

Contacts

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Project Area
Bidwell Ranch
Butte County, California



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Date: Thursday, March 29, 2007

Subject: Development of the Bidwell Ranch Conservation and Mitigation Bank

What is the role of River Partners on Bidwell Ranch?

River Partners is working with the City of Chico to develop a mitigation and conservation bank on the Bidwell Ranch property. River Partners will complete the tasks necessary to develop the site as a conservation and mitigation bank. Once completed, the City will make a decision on whether the benefits of converting the property to a conservation and mitigation bank outweigh other uses of the property. Federal and State agencies must certify and approve the documentation before the site can operate as a conservation or mitigation bank. Chico-based, River Partners is a nonprofit, public benefit organization and has extensive experience in natural resource management and working with agencies and the public to provide solutions to complex environmental questions.

What is a conservation or mitigation bank?

A conservation or mitigation bank is land managed for its natural resource values. Habitat credits are sold to entities that need to remedy environmental impacts. A conservation bank protects habitat for threatened and endangered species. Mitigation banks specifically compensate for unavoidable wetland losses. These different goals account for differences in the policies guiding operations of the two banks.

Why create a conservation or mitigation bank?

A conservation or mitigation bank is privately or publicly owned land managed for its natural resource values. In exchange for permanent environmental protection, the bank operator may sell habitat credits to developers who need to satisfy legal requirements for the environmental impacts of development. A conservation or mitigation bank is a free-market enterprise that:

- Offer landowners economic incentives to protect natural resources;
- Save developers time and money by providing them with the certainty of pre-approved compensation lands; and
- Consolidate small, fragmented wetland mitigation projects into large contiguous sites which will have much higher wildlife habitat values.
- Provide for long-term protection and management of habitat.

Documents prepared for this project

Site Inventory – a brief summary of biological resources (from existing reports and studies) on the property.

Preliminary Mitigation Proposal – a working document that provides bank details.

Management Plan – provides details on the practices needed to improve habitat on the property.

Mitigation Bank Enabling Instrument (MBEI) – the legal instrument that establishes the bank.

Conservation agreement – an easement on the property that protects the site from future development.

Endowment Account – the fund required for long-term maintenance of the property.

How long will the project take and what's involved?

The project will take approximately 2 years to complete. The main tasks of this project are to:

- Review and summarize existing documents and information.
- Establish a Citizen Work Group to provide advice to us on the project approach and review key documents.
- Complete and submit a Site Inventory of biological resources and Preliminary Mitigation Proposal to State and Federal agencies.
- Develop a Management Plan and Mitigation Bank Enabling Instrument (MBEI).
- Prepare and record a conservation agreement. The entity that holds the agreement will be determined during the course of the project.
- Establish the mechanism for the endowment account with the appropriate entity.

How much will the conservation and mitigation bank cost?

Selling habitat credits will allow the City to recoup costs associated with the property acquisition, and pay for the long-term maintenance of the property. The value of credits will be determined as the inventory of the property is completed and in consultation with the regulatory agencies. Depending on the habitat protected and the demand in an area, mitigation and conservation credits can be sold for tens of thousands of dollars an acre.

What will happen to the property if it becomes a mitigation bank?

As a mitigation or conservation bank, the property will remain as open space that supports habitat for a variety of plants and wildlife. Mitigation and conservation banks must have a sufficient area to support the intended biological resources being preserved. It is anticipated that future active management activities will be needed to enhance the property for habitat. If approved, the property will be entered into a conservation easement and be managed for its natural resources.

What is the role of the public on the project?

Public input is very important to the project. Citizens may sign-up to receive project updates and comment on draft documents. River Partners will also seek input through a Citizen Work Group. The citizen group will advise the project team on the long term management of the site and the development of the conservation and mitigation bank. Please contact River Partners to get on the mailing list or join the citizen work group.

Will the public be allowed to access the property?

The project will consider public uses and recommend ones that are consistent with the site as mitigation and conservation bank. Regulatory agencies often impose limits on the recreational uses on protected areas. Given this constraint, not all recreational activities that people enjoy in upper Bidwell Park are likely to be compatible with the property as a conservation and mitigation bank. However, we intend to develop a management plan that protects environmental resources and maximizes public access.

For more information: Please contact Dan Efseaff (defseaff@riverpartners.org) (530) 894-5401 ext 21) or visit our website www.riverpartners.org.



Bidwell Ranch Project Citizen Work Group

River Partners and the City of Chico invite members of the public to help shape the Project. Citizens may join 1) the email list and receive project updates and provide comments on the project or 2) become members of the Citizen Work Group.

Citizen Work Group Role

- The Citizen Group will provide interested participants a means to provide input to River Partners to help achieve project objectives.
- The Citizen Group serves an advisory role. It is not a decision-making body; but the group's input will be factored into the development of Bidwell Ranch as a Conservation and Mitigation Bank.

Minimum Commitment for Citizen Work Group Members

- Intention to participate fully in the workgroup during the 18-24 month long process.
- Attend approximately 4 Citizen Work Group Meetings (held on weekday afternoons, approximately 2-3 hours each).
- Work respectfully and cooperatively with other Citizen Work Group members who may possess different points of view.
- Provide constructive input to help the Project Team on the management plan and to develop the site as a Conservation and Mitigation Bank.
- Review and comment on Draft Documents (Site Inventory and Preliminary Mitigation Proposal, Draft Management Plan and Mitigation Bank Enabling Instrument).
- Communicate effectively to members of the workgroup and community.
- Access the internet and receive email.

Schedule and Meeting Format

- The Citizen Work Group will meet approximately 4 times:
 - Spring (April) 2007 - Site Visit and Tour
 - Summer 2007 - Site Inventory and Preliminary Mitigation Proposal
 - Winter 2008 - Management Plan, and
 - Summer 2008 - Update on Management Plan.
- Citizen Work Group meetings will be informal working sessions attended by Project Team and Citizen Work Group members, and potentially key agency staff.
- Members of the Citizen Work Group will also be asked to review drafts of the Site Inventory and Preliminary Mitigation Proposal (Summer 2007), Management Plan (Spring 2008), and associated products.
- For the general public wishing to stay informed regarding Citizen Work Group meeting results, a summary of each meeting will be posted on the River Partners website, or may be picked up at the River Partners office.

Other Ways to be Involved and/or Stay Informed about the Project

- Contact Project Team members at tonight's meeting to ask questions or make comments and suggestions.
- Check the River Partners Website (www.riverpartners.org) for project documents, updates, and meeting summaries (www.riverpartners.org/where-we-work/bidwell.html).
- Sign-up for our e-mail list and receive notices and updates.
- Talk to Citizen Work Group members.
- Email (info@riverpartners.org), call (530-894-5401), or write (River Partners, 580 Vallombrosa Ave, Chico, CA 95926). Please note that you are interested in the Bidwell Ranch project.

To sign up for the Citizen Work Group, notify the Project Team at the public meeting.

PROJECT TEAM



	March 2007	Summer 2007	Winter 2008	Summer 2008
Materials and Data Provided to CWG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of Project Description of CWG Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site Inventory: Detailed description of land, plants, and wildlife Preliminary Mitigation Proposal: Proposal identifying target species, habitats, credit areas, and compatible land uses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Site Inventory and Mitigation Proposal Preliminary ideas for how to delineate use areas and manage the site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Management Plan Draft Mitigation Bank Enabling Instrument
CWG Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about project Commit to participate Explain concerns Offer suggestions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute local knowledge regarding the site Comment on the Preliminary Proposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about site management issues, challenges, and opportunities Provide ideas for land use, public access, and mitigation area delineation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comment on the Draft Management Plan Comment on the Draft Mitigation Bank Enabling Instrument Provide ideas for land use, public access, and mitigation area delineation

To sign up for the Citizen Work Group, notify the Project Team at the public meeting.