

Public Meeting Summary – March 29, 2007

Bidwell Ranch Mitigation Bank Project

Meeting Time, Location, and Purpose

The Bidwell Ranch Mitigation Bank Project Team conducted a public meeting on Thursday, March 29th from 5:30 – 7:00 pm at the Chico Municipal Building. The Project Team includes the City of Chico and River Partners, a non-profit organization.

The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the Bidwell Ranch Mitigation Bank Project and inform the public regarding participation opportunities. Presentations by the Project Team provided background regarding the project site and history and covered an introduction to the ecology of the site and how mitigation banks work.

The meeting described herein is one component of a public involvement approach that will provide interested members of the public a variety of opportunities to comment and make suggestions during the course of the project.

Meeting Overview

Approximately 15 people attended the meeting. Attachment 1 presents the sign-in sheets for the meeting. Materials provided to those attending included an agenda, project description, answers to frequently asked questions, and a description of public participation opportunities. Poster displays provided additional information on the project, the site and its resources, land use around the site, species of interest on the site, and the project schedule. Literature and displays describing River Partners' other activities were also available.

The meeting included about one hour of informational presentations. The agenda for the presentations included:

- Introduction
- Conservation and Mitigation Banks
- Project Overview
- Introduction to Site Ecology
- Opportunities for Public Involvement
- Questions and Answers

Presentations and Comments

This summary lists the presenters and meeting topics. The meeting agenda, handouts, slide presentations, posters, and this summary are available on the Bidwell Ranch web page (<http://www.riverpartners.org/where-we-work/bidwell/bidwell.html>).

Introduction

Coral Cavanagh (Coralium Consultants), meeting facilitator, welcomed those attending and stated the purpose of the public meeting. She reviewed the meeting agenda and the ground

rules for the meeting. Dan Efseaff (River Partners) and Brendan Vieg (City of Chico) continued with additional introductory material concerning the project history, the planning team, and its role.

Discussion of Conservation and Mitigation Banks and Project Overview

Mr. Vieg and Mr. Efseaff described how conservation and mitigation banks function and discussed conditions on the potential mitigation and conservation bank site and the land surrounding it (as determined during a Site Inventory, an early project activity). They noted which key agencies would be involved (US Fish and Wildlife, Department of Fish and Game, US Army Corps of Engineers, and the US EPA) and described the steps involved.

They explained that River Partners will review and compile the technical information and produce the documents necessary to establish a Conservation and Mitigation Bank approved by involved federal and state agencies. Supporting activities include an inventory of biological resources (based on past studies) and site and ownership characteristics; establishment of a management budget; and development of the agreements to set up the bank. River Partners will develop the information and agreements, but ultimately, the City will decide whether to move forward with the mitigation bank.

Mr. Efseaff elaborated on the roles of the Project Team, the Citizen Work Group, and the Mitigation Bank Review Team, which will comprise the agency representatives with whom the Project Team will interact to develop agreement regarding project components. Mr. Efseaff also previewed how the Citizen Work Group's activities would assist with the project, and displayed the anticipated project schedule.

Introduction to Site Ecology

Tom Griggs (River Partners) described the ecology of the site, which includes vernal pools, and explained their importance. He displayed and explained photographs that illustrated the setting and characteristics of the site and discussed the potential ecological resources available on the Bidwell Ranch property.

Public Participation Opportunities

Christiana Conser (River Partners) described the ways that interested members of the public could become involved and help shape the Bidwell Ranch project. She highlighted the opportunity for involvement in the Citizen Work Group, which will be a means for stakeholders to learn about the project, do in-depth reviews of project deliverables, and provide input that will be factored into project documents and agreements.

Public Comment and Questions

The Project Team gathered a number of questions, comments, and suggestions during the meeting. The following was recorded on flip charts during the meeting. Some of the questions were answered during the meeting, but others will be addressed over the course of the project.

- Dr. Maslin's website (http://www.csuchico.edu/~pmaslin/ChicoFlood/Syc_Div.html) provides some good information on the Sycamore/Mud Creek Flood Diversion, a key feature of the site.
- Who will maintain the "ledger" of credits, finances and such?

- Can the City manage the Mitigation and Conservation Bank? Would it be a conflict of interest for the City to use the bank?
- The Site Inventory was conducted in a dry year – will it be representative?
- Will the mitigation bank pay for itself?
- Other developments have changed Sycamore Creek from seasonal to perennial and have added nutrients to the water, causing vegetation changes.
- There is active erosion on the south side of the channel near the big bend in the channel near Hancock Park.
- What effects did creation of the channel have?
- Get the channel design specs, if possible. Dr. Maslin may have them.
- Will the involved agencies reach agreement?
- Is there any restoration/enhancement/creation aspect of this project?
- There should not be any restoration/enhancement/creation aspect of this project, and the agencies would agree.
- Will the plan look at how the development on the western side of the ranch will affect the project?
- What will the endowment do and how will it be handled?
- Will the Project Team work with DWR on the erosion problem?
- Where is the actual property boundary on the map: the fence line?
- The portion of the Sycamore/Mud Creek channel in Bidwell Ranch is part of a bigger drainage, which should be considered as a unit.
- There is illegal dumping occurring on the site.
- How will interested people be able to contribute if they are not members of the Citizens Work Group?
- When will decisions regarding public access be made?

- Attachment 1
(Sign-in sheets)