

## **Verbena Fields Restoration Project Neighborhood Meeting March 20, 2008**

Meeting notifications were mailed to all households within 500 feet of the restoration site, 4 signs were posted on the site, press releases and public service announcements were sent to local newspapers and radio stations and neighbors who had previously signed up for email notifications were sent an email about the meeting. Twenty-six people attended the meeting, including 13 project neighbors.

**1. Welcome and Introductions:** The project team was introduced—Mary Brentwood (Environmental Director, Mechoopda) and Ali Meders-Knight (project manager, Mechoopda), Shawn Rohrbacker (landscape designer, Land Image), Eric Ginney (geomorphologist, Philip Williams), Susan Strachan (project manager, CSU Chico College of Engineering), Susan Mason (project outreach, Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance), Roger Cole (restoration designer, Streaminders), Timmarie Hamill (monitoring & school-based volunteer planting, Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance), Dennis Beardsley (intern Assistant City Manager, City of Chico)

A detailed project description, preliminary construction drawings, presentations and other project information are posted on the BCCWA web site at [www.bigchicocreek.org](http://www.bigchicocreek.org).

**2. Project History-**Former gravel mining site, now owned by the city of Chico

**A. Partners:** City of Chico, Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance, Mechoopda Indian Tribe, Streaminders, CSU, Chico Research Foundation

**B. Grant Funding:** State Water Resources Control Board grant of \$907,000

**3. Project Description:** Susan Strachan (SS) made a PowerPoint presentation about the various elements of the project, including removal of the asphalt roadways, expansion of the floodplain, bioswales to clean stormwater, creation of a walking trail and the planting of native species. Susan Mason (SM) reviewed the pre-construction activities that will take place over the next few months—trash and scrap metal pickup, invasive plant removal, goat grazing, flagging of piles of concrete and asphalt for removal or reprocessing. Ali Meders-Knight (A M-K) described the Mechoopda's relationship to this place, their focus on sustainable gathering of plants from their natural locations, not from plots that are identifiable as gardens and how they hope to share their knowledge of native plants and their uses with VF neighbors and the community.

**4. Project Schedule:** Pre-construction monitoring, site cleanup and invasive plant removal are underway. At the request of the Butte County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, the site's almond trees will be removed. Some large almond trees may be treated with herbicide and left as standing deadwood to provide wildlife habitat value. Goats will graze the site in late April/early May to reduce yellow starthistle and the fire hazard during construction. The project will go out to bid this summer, with fall construction ending by October 15<sup>th</sup>. Planting will start then and continue through spring. The project ends in June 2009.

## 5. Questions and Answers:

- *Do the Mechoopda have a plant list yet?* A M-K: We're in the process of creating a list, based on what plants were native to the area but have since disappeared, as well as what plants will be useful for their traditional practices.
- *Once the project is built, will Chico have money available to maintain the site? There has been lots of trash dumping, occasional motorcycle damage—is there money in the city budget for litter and graffiti control?* Dennis Beardsley (DB): Yes, Chico will provide site maintenance. Also, once the project is completed, the area won't look like a place where dumping or vandalism is acceptable. A M-K: Since the Mechoopda will be visiting the site regularly, they can help control invasive plants and other problems.
- *Will any new soil be brought to the site?* Roger Cole (RC): No, we will work with the soils that are at the site. Compacted areas of soil will be ripped to loosen them.
- *If the asphalt road is removed, won't that make it more difficult for emergency vehicles to access the channel in case of fire?* DB: Several years ago, the Chico Fire Dept. identified the best access points along the channel and created access roads into the channel at those locations. Verbena Fields was not one of those points. However, even after the road is removed, it will still be possible for the Fire Dept, Police Dept and PG&E to access the channel at the west side of the property. Nothing will be planted or built to prevent that access.
- *What are the bridge construction materials?* DB: It will be like the newer bridges in Lower Bidwell Park--steel with a concrete tread.
- *Will the wetlands create mosquito problems?* RC: No, they will dry out just like the creek. DB: the bioswales for the storm drain outlets will reduce water ponding so there will be less likelihood of mosquito breeding than there is now.
- *How will dogs be controlled?* DB: Dogs already are supposed to be on leash in VF. Dog leash signage will be posted on the site and the doggie bag holders (which have already been installed) help make visitors to the site more conscious that they need to control and pick up after their dogs.
- *Will Park Watch patrol VF?* DB: Several Park Watch volunteers who live near VF have offered to do their patrols at VF. He also hopes that adjacent neighbors who now have solid wood fences will replace them with wire fencing (as most of the property owners north of the channel have) to increase the number of people watching the site. Also, he encourages neighbors to have pedestrian gates from their properties into VF.
- *The cottonwood trees in the northwest corner of the site are only standing because of the asphalt over their roots. Once the asphalt is removed, they'll fall down.* RC: new cottonwood trees will be planted.
- *As soon as the water slows down, it will dump gravel. If the streambed is widened, that's where the gravel will be deposited.* EG: The north side of the channel at this point is very deep. The excavation will just remove high spots, not excavate to this deep level.
- *How many trees will be removed?* SR: The current plan calls for 8 native trees to be removed. Several large native trees that are in the area of floodplain excavation will receive protection in the form of root wads anchored at the

upstream edge of a “tree island.” This approach is proposed to maintain those mature trees to shade the channel and riparian habitat. Some of the almond tree trunks and roots will be used for this purpose.

- *Will the trees that are planted be cuttings only?* Shawn Rohrbacker: No, container trees will be used for some of the major plantings and a temporary irrigation system installed to water them for several years. If there is money available to plant street trees (native oaks), those will probably be 15-gallon trees.
- *Why are willows planted in the middle of the channel?* RC: No final decision yet about specific locations for willow plantings, but they won't be planted in the center of the channel.
- *The almond trees on the northwest corner of the site may be providing some privacy for the property owners there. Must these trees be removed?* SS: These trees may be outside the project area. SM will check with the property owners to see if this might be a problem.
- *A neighbor on the west side wants to maintain her view into VF and would like to review the final planting plans to make sure that her view won't be obstructed.* SM will meet with her.