

District 2 Awards - Hall of Honor Application

Award applying for (Check only one. See category for eligibility)

☒ Regional Treasure Category

☐ Professional Leadership Category

☐ Legacy Category

Name of Nominee or Regional Treasure Bidwell Park

Person Submitting the Nomination

Name Dan Efseaff Title/Position Parks & Natural Resources Director

Mailing Address City of Chico Park Division, P.O. Box 3420

City/State Chico, CA Zip Code 95927

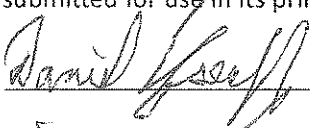
Phone 530-896-7801 Email defseaff@ci.chico.ca.us

Person Submitting the Nomination should follow the steps below:

1. Review CPRS District 2 boundary map at www.cprsd2.com.
2. Review the complete submitted category criteria (professional, etc.).
3. If you need assistance Provide a Letter of Intent "Recommended": Due June 1, 2012. So that we may be able to assist you in providing a complete application please provide on a separate sheet of paper: Your name and contact information, the name of the Nominee or Regional Treasure, category you are applying for, recognizing the sub-criteria within the category identify what information you can provide and what you may need assistance with. Please submit to Barbara Wackford at the address below.
4. Application Filing Deadline: Friday, October 5, 2012 5:00 p.m. Submit on a separate sheet, detailed information about each sub-criteria area of the category submitted. Providing information on as many sub-criteria categories as applicable will enhance the eligibility and merit of the nomination. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Award recipient will be required to submit electronically a copy of the application and 6 to 8 high resolution photographs with captions along with support materials.
5. If assistance or answers to questions are needed, Barbara Wackford, Chair of the Selection Committee, can be reached at (916) 422-1429.
6. The stated deadlines will be strictly adhered to by the Selection Committee.
 - Submit Letter of Intent, application and supporting information to:
Name: Barbara Wackford
Address: 5618 Delcliff Circle, Sacramento, CA 95822
Email: bwackford@aol.com
 - Applications reviewed and evaluated: October-November 2012.
 - Notification of results to applicant by December 2012.
 - Presentation of awards: Spring 2013. Details of presentation and award ceremony will be discussed with award winners at time of notification.
7. Person submitting nomination additionally agrees to the following:

I hereby give CPRS District 2 the irrevocable right and permission to copyright and publish photographs or other digital materials submitted for use in its printed publications, audiovisual presentations, and/or online presentations.

Signature



Date

10/3/12

Detailed responses to sub-criteria

1) Profound or original influence on the recreation and leisure opportunities and/or quality of life within the region.

"National parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst." Wallace Stegner, 1983.

The federal government created Yellowstone National Park in 1872. In 1902, the State of California founded Big Basin State Park. A year before President Theodore Roosevelt signed the bill transferring Yosemite to federal ownership (1906), 11 years before the founding of the National Park Service (1916), and 22 years before the formation of the State Park Commission (1927)—the City of Chico had a unique park that has inspired generations of citizens.

In 1905, Annie Bidwell, on behalf of herself and her late husband, John Bidwell, gifted 1,903 acres to the City of Chico, "as a token of their love and affection and that the grand work of God may be preserved to his glory and the happiness and pleasure of the people of said City for all time (from the deed)."

Unlike State and National Parks, this was a gift from private individuals to their community. Unlike other developed city parks from that era, the deed required the "preservation and protection of the waters of Chico Creek" and to "sacredly guard" the trees, shrubs, and vines of the Park. These conservation concepts are certainly fitting of a couple that was close friends with John Muir, and a unique and extraordinarily generous gift for the early 1900's. Although a city park, Bidwell Park certainly fits in the "best idea" tradition, and continues to have a profound influence on the City and region.

Today, at 3,670 acres Bidwell Park (Park) is the third largest municipally-owned park in California and 14th largest in the country (Trust for Public Land, 2011 City Park Facts). Bidwell Park starts near the heart of downtown Chico on the Valley floor and stretches 11 miles into the Cascade/Sierra Nevada Foothills along Big Chico Creek

(Figures 1 and 2). Big Chico Creek serves as an important biological corridor linking the mountains to the Sacramento River.

Many citizens like to think of Chico as a small town with a big park, instead of the 14th largest metropolitan area in California with a regional park, packed with sensitive resources, recreational opportunities and more annual visits than Redwood or Lassen National Park.

The Park encompasses 17 vegetation communities, and with over 900 different plants species documented in the Park (about 39 are special status or listed species), along with several threatened and endangered wildlife species.

Bidwell Park offers a variety of educational, recreational, and leisure opportunities that draw visitors from throughout the region. Whether it is walking your dog a few blocks from home in Lower Park, or removing invasive plants as a volunteer, or hopping on your mountain bike to hit the more rugged trails of Upper Park, or joining your child's class in restoring their adopted picnic site area, Bidwell Park promotes a high quality of life for our community and the region. While California State University, Chico may draw in young adults, many community members cite Bidwell Park as a reason for calling Chico home long after school is over.

The Park is divided into three areas (Lower, Middle and Upper Park) and all three areas offer leisure and recreation opportunities. Lower Park is comprised of flat terrain with a thick canopy of trees and includes valley oak and sycamore woodlands. It has creek side picnic areas, an exercise trail, the World of Trees (one of the earliest Forestry stations planted in 1888 by John Bidwell and designated a historical landmark), children's play areas, baseball and softball fields, and reservable group picnic areas. Chico Creek Nature Center, the Park's designated information center is also in Lower Park.

A popular, developed area is the One Mile Recreation Area situated several blocks from downtown Chico, and home to the Sycamore Pool, a one of a kind swimming pool with concrete floor and walls and Big Chico Creek running through it. One Mile also has Caper Acres children's playground, a long time favorite place for kids

built in the 1950s, a large reservable group picnic site with bandstand used for fundraising events, and public and private parties, horseshoe pits and the Sycamore baseball fields. One of Lower Park's longest-lasting claims to fame is that the Sherwood Forest scenes in the original *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, starring Errol Flynn and company, were filmed there among the majestic oaks and sycamores in 1938.

Middle Park begins east of Manzanita Avenue and runs to the east of Horseshoe Lake, which was once used to water the Bidwell Golf Course nearby. In Middle Park, the trails run through areas dotted with wildflower fields, vernal pools, and blue oak woodland. Landmarks such as the Chico Community Observatory (with the world's first outdoor planetarium); Chico Equestrian Arena; Chico Rod and Gun Club; Bidwell Golf Club (a scenic 18 hole course opened in 1929 and one of Northern California's original municipal golf courses); Five Mile Recreation Area; and Hooker Oak Recreation Area and Wildwood Park, both with ball fields and children's play equipment. A Mechoopda Indian village once existed near the Five Mile area.

Upper Park, the easternmost portion of the Park, is characterized by the steep foothill terrain of the Cascade's and many geologic formations, including the Chico Formation, Tuscan, Redbluff and Lovejoy Basalts, formed by volcanic activity millions of years ago. Areas such as Monkey Face overlook and the cliffs along the northern boundary of the Peregrine Point Disc Golf Course provide panoramic views of Upper Bidwell Park. The area also provides access to more rugged multi-use trails, popular scenic swimming holes such as Bear, Alligator, Salmon and Brown's holes along Big Chico Creek. These holes serve as holding areas for adult spring-run Chinook salmon. Evidence of the Mechoopda Indians is evident in the park, including tools, shallow shelter caves, and acorn grinding holes.

2) Will continue for generations

Bidwell Park celebrated its centennial in 2005. Annie Bidwell donated the Park to the City of Chico on July 20, 1905. In her deed to the City (see Supplemental information), Mrs. Bidwell noted that the land be used as a public park for the benefit of the citizens and residents of the City of Chico for "all time" and for the City "to have and to hold...the above mentioned...premises,...forever."

Not only has the Park size been maintained over that time, the citizens have doubled the original gift. For example, in 1922, Cedar Grove and the Forestry experimental station were added to the Park. In 1995, the Park added 1,200 acres of land south of Big Chico Creek.

The affinity that the community holds for Bidwell Park runs extremely deep and resides in our community's DNA. The City logo shows a depiction of the Hooker Oak--one of the famous historical landmarks in the Park. Generations of people (and their kids) from the Northern Sacramento Valley have swam in the Park's cool waters, biked beneath majestic valley oaks, and frolicked at Caper Acres. And long before that, this landscape sustained the native Mechoopda people.

Many people choose to live in the area because of the Park. It is safe to say that as long as there is a Chico, there will be a Bidwell Park.

3) Has contributed to the quality of the development and growth of individuals, quality of life, causes or movements

Bidwell Park can be considered a historic artifact, a mini-grand canyon, a biologist's laboratory, a fitness gym and a place to explore -- all in one. It is a magnet with many of its annual visitors coming from outside the area.

Bidwell Park is always bustling with events scheduled almost every weekend of the year. The Park serves as a fund raising engine for the community with clubs and nonprofit agencies utilizing the Park for regular practice, and special events in bicycling, running, horseback riding, hiking, fishing and swimming. Annual events such as Chico Running Club's Almond Bowl and Bidwell Classic have been held for over 30 years with thousands of participants. Hundreds of organizations, clubs and individuals benefit from the Park's natural beauty, historic setting and ease of access.

Recently, the Parks Division has pursued better estimates of visitation. Last year, we estimated total visits to the Park to be at least 1.1 million. We used conservative measures and view this estimate as a lower boundary of total visits (for example, we focused on access by car, whereas the majority of or users access the Park by other means foot, bike, or hoof) and utilize the Park as an important transportation corridor.

Chico is also developing as an arts Community with the Park serving as inspiration for many artists (for example we include some examples of the prints from Jake Early in the photographs section).

4) Has contributed to the quality of the development and growth of individuals or group training or education, life fulfillment, or leisure pursuit

The Chico Park Division has developed interpretive and regulatory signage for the Park, publications, brochures, maps, the *Bidwell Park Pulse* (quarterly newsletter), a Park Minute radio spots and quarterly Park Talks where staff is on hand to meet with the public out in the Park. Division staff (Rangers, Park Services Coordinator, and Parks & Natural Resources Manager) provide presentations throughout the year to various audiences, and school classes. The Rangers conduct pro-active outreach to visitors and introduce new users to the park and remind long time users of park rules. They are a wealth of knowledge about the parks' plants, animals, facilities, and history. The Rangers strive to educate the public so that a sense of appreciation and stewardship is cultivated toward the Park's resources.

The inspiration of Bidwell Park as an outdoor laboratory has benefited college research students at Chico State and Butte College as well as all of the elementary and secondary school students, and other schools from Butte, Glenn, and Tehama Counties. Parkview Elementary (shares a boundary with the Park), Sierra View Elementary and Chico Jr. High have adopted areas of the Park to care for. According to CSUC Biology Professor Colleen Hatfield, "The park provides a physical setting that illustrates many of the principles they learn in the classroom, a valuable experience not accessible in the majority of classes across the country. For example, the juxtaposition of the park to the city and the adjacent foothills is ideal for studying urban to rural gradient patterns in ecological processes."

Volunteering in Bidwell Park also introduces individuals and groups to the Park's natural resources, history and plant life. The Park Volunteer Program has a dedicated Park staff member and over the last six years the program has also helped community volunteers develop a sense of stewardship and provided the opportunity to "give back" to the Park they use. In 2011 alone, volunteers contributed over 17,500 hours of labor to restoration efforts, weeding, trail repair, GPS mapping, trash removal, painting and adoption of park areas for on-going care.

The City's Volunteer Program has long standing relationships with the Cal State University at Chico's Community Action Volunteers in Education (CAVE), Upward Bound High School program, Butte College Natural Resources Division, CSUC Parks and Recreation Department, and Chico High School whose horticulture students propagate native plants for the Park's restoration areas.

Friends of Bidwell Park, Streamminders, Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance, Kids & Creeks, CA Native Plant Society, Mt. Lassen Chapter, Chico Cat Coalition, Altacal Audubon Society and the Stream Team are just a few of the volunteer based groups that work to better the health of Bidwell Park.

Several facilities provide outreach, interpretive and other natural resource-related programs to the public. The Chico Creek Nature Center (CCNC), an independent non-profit organization created in 1982, leases its property in Lower Park from the City. CCNC has served as the primary interpretive and information center for the Park since authorized to do so in the 1990 Park Master Management Plan. The facility hosts exhibits and workshops attended by visitors from the community and the region and throughout the school year, naturalists lead K-6 students from a five-county area on a variety of hikes and outdoor education programs that support California's science standards. During the summer, the Center offers day camps for area children. Another educational facility is the Chico Community Observatory in Middle Park, which hosts star watching programs throughout the year as well as summer children's programs. The Chico Area Recreation District (CARD) offers occasional natural history and interpretive programs that include Bidwell Park. The Park also has many groups offering nature hikes, bicycle tours and walk/running events throughout Upper, Middle and Lower Park.

5) Has received recognition, awards, honors from the greater public

The Park is the natural heart and soul of the Chico community and regularly voted on by the community as the best thing about Chico in the *Chico News & Review's* "Best of Chico Contest."

Areas of the Park have been recognized for their historical significance. For example:

- Bidwell Park's Hooker Oak Tree (located in Middle Park) received a California Historical Landmark by the CA Office of Historic Preservation: NO.
313 HOOKER OAK - In 1887 Annie E. K. Bidwell named this huge oak after English botanist Sir Joseph Hooker. When it fell during a windstorm in 1977, it was estimated to be over a thousand years old - it was nearly a hundred feet tall and 29 feet in circumference eight feet from the ground. The largest branch measured 111 feet from trunk to tip - circumference of outside branches was nearly five hundred feet.
- Chico Forestry Station and Nursery (now known as the World of Trees in Cedar Grove, Lower Bidwell Park) received the designation of a CA Registered Historical Landmark no. 840-2 by the State Department of Parks and Recreation in cooperation with the CA Division of Forestry and the City of Chico on May 25, 1972 (see Supplemental Materials).

Interestingly, while the Park receives a high level of interest from the public, there has not been any formal recognition of the role that the Park plays for the region. It is clear that citizens value the Park, we believe that recognition may allow us to highlight problems in the Park such as its aging infrastructure, protection of resources, trail maintenance, homeless issues, vegetation management, etc; and provide opportunities for the public to give back in the form of donations, recruitment of Park Watch members and expansion of the volunteer program, and awareness of rules to protect the park.

Perhaps the essence of what the Park means to the community can be expressed by the "Spirit of Bidwell Park". As part of the development of the 2008 Bidwell Park Master Management Plan, the Citizen's Advisory Committee developed the "Spirit of Bidwell Park", which captures the poetic context of how our citizens view the Park:

Spirit of Bidwell Park

We hear the mountain breeze as it begins to draw down the gorge of Big Chico Creek in its nightly descent. The sound mingles with the gurgle of the water and brings on a peaceful smile as the cool air blows across our faces. The air smells good now, smells of wildflowers and fresh leaves. The rock feels solid beneath our feet as we hike up to higher ground ... to waves of grasses where meadowlarks sing their evening ritual. Their song beckons to all who hear it to stop and reflect on the day, on life ... and to be joyful.

We can't help but feel this is a cathedral, a sanctuary from the daily rush of life, and a place to marvel at, learn from, play in, ... and to protect. Bidwell Park is the core of our being; a vein that runs through our community, that connects the broad valley to the rolling foothills and the past to the present. The whole park feels sacred ... it fills us physically, mentally, and spiritually. We feel calm and we are renewed here. We can escape the relentless hustle of work and the frenzies of city life and of modern technology. We can connect with the past, enjoy the present, and ponder the future. We can find solitude - or share this special place with family and friends. We can run and see no one for miles

We listen intently to the wind and the stream as we reflect on the countless lives past and present that have stood where we now stand and wandered and wondered where we are now. We can see kids swimming in Sycamore Pool and climbing and laughing among the castle spires at Caper Acres; young folks dipping at Bear Hole and Salmon Hole; hikers and horseback riders clipping along, mountain bikers clanging pedals and challenging the dirt and rock trails or whizzing by on paved roadways; moms and dads pushing babies along wooded paths in Lower Park; older folks enjoying a peaceful stroll among the welcoming shade of the majestic trees in Annie's Glen, families marveling at the stars and planets dotting the night sky on a cool clear night at the observatory.

Mammoths once roamed these hills and valleys. Bidwell Park was and still is the home of the sovereign Nation of the Mechoopda people. Their ancestors fished and hunted and told stories here not long ago. They cared about their home, and still do, as they are here to enjoy the park today. So much life calls this place home; salmon returning from the ocean to spawn in Big Chico Creek, deer, mountain lions, and black bears roaming the hillsides, turkey vultures and eagles soaring overhead on thermals, countless songbirds making their summer homes in oak and cottonwood trees. The limbs of the majestic oaks, sycamores, and cottonwoods give shade to the rushing waters of the creek.

We thank Annie and John Bidwell for having the foresight and generosity to give the park to our community, to Chico, for all to appreciate its beauty and splendor. And we feel the responsibility to carry on that vision, to protect this special place, to give it the tender loving care it deserves and to share it with the community ... we want to protect it for future generations to enjoy ... and grow in, and we want to share it with the wildlife whose home it is.

-Bidwell Park Master Management Plan (EDAW 2008)

6) Contributes to the economic vitality of the region.

Chico is a regional center for the Sacramento Valley and northeastern California. Although Chico is one of the largest cities in the state not served by an interstate highway, keys to its success are tied to the University, its agricultural base, vibrant downtown, and certainly, Bidwell Park.

The Park Division devotes about \$1.8 million for lands that it manages of which Bidwell Park is the most significant resource. The City processed \$511,670 in payments to over 131 vendors that provided professional services, materials, and supplies for the management of the Park (approximately, 87% local suppliers). Our employees live in the community and take tremendous pride in their contribution to the Park. However, the economic benefit is small relative to the contribution to quality of life and local economic well being that the Park provides in enhanced real estate values, sporting equipment sales, event sales, health benefits, and venues for supporting non-profits.

Real estate agents will often boast of the proximity to the Park in the first line of a property description (which helps increase the sale price of homes). Chico has over a dozen bike shops within a short ride to the Park. Our Park is packed throughout the year with special events, fundraisers and things to do that attract people to the area. Such events held throughout the year attract tourist dollars to our community and fundraising efforts help support our community's local nonprofits. For example the 7th annual Run for Food attracts over 4,000 runners and raises over \$50,000 for a local homeless shelter. While magnitudes vary, Bidwell Park has over 100 public events each year.

Many of the attached letters provide some insight into our community's support of Bidwell Park as a "Regional Treasure."