



City of Chico

Parks Division

Volunteer Manual

“Doin’ our part for Chico’s parks!”

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in the City of Chico, Partners, Ambassadors, Leaders and Stewards (PALS) Volunteer Program! On average, Chico PALS Volunteers contribute over 20,000 hours annually to Chico's greenways and parks. The energy and achievements that volunteers have brought since the program was formally established in 1996 to Chico's greenways and parks cannot be overstated. Along with the Bidwell Park and Playground Commission (BPPC) and City staff, volunteers work toward the City's mission of preserving, protecting, restoring, and enhancing Chico's parks and greenways. The volunteer program coordinates volunteer efforts directly in support of the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan, the BPPC and the Park Division's goals.

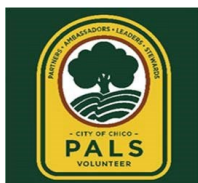
This document is designed to be a PALS beginning guide. The information here will help answer questions and provide direction. There are so many beautiful areas to visit and steward in Chico's parks and greenways. Please contact the park office at (530) 896-7800 or by email at parkinfo@chico.ca.gov if you have questions or are seeking park information.

Additional information, training, and tools will be provided to you as appropriate to your volunteer interest. You are encouraged to expand your parks knowledge. Spend a little time and get acquainted with the diverse wildlife, recreational activities, trails, and plants found in Chico's amazing parks and greenways.

The mission of the PALS Volunteer Program is to enlist the help of the local community in managing resources and expanding volunteerism in as many aspects of enhancing Chico's parks and greenways as possible. PALS volunteers connect with the community and assist with provision of information, various trail maintenance projects, litter removal, vegetation management, habitat restoration and much more!

The PALS Volunteer Program has incorporated these various tasks as part of the continuing efforts in support of the Parks Division, for the health and well-being of the parks and greenways for present and future generations.

Your commitment, time, and interest in Chico's parks and greenways is very much appreciated. Welcome to the City of Chico, PALS Volunteer Program!



Contact Information

City of Chico-Public Works, Parks Division Office

965 Fir St, Chico, CA 95927

Phone: 530-896-7800

Email: parkinfo@chicoca.gov

Open M-F, 8:00am-5:00pm

Public Works Director-Operations

Erik Gustafson

Office: 530-894-4204

Email: erik.gustafson@chicoca.gov

Parks and Natural Resources Manager

Shane Romain

Office: 530-896-7831

Email: shane.romain@chicoca.gov

Assistant Parks and Natural Resources Manager

PALS Program Coordinator

Lindsay Amundson

Office: 530-896-7833

Cell: 530-570-2773

Email: lindsay.amundson@chicoca.gov

Park Field Supervisor

James Erven

Office: 530-896-7800

Email: james.erven@chicoca.gov

In the event of an emergency call 911

PALS Volunteer Program Overview

The City of Chico, Park Division's PALS Volunteer Program is designed to encourage active public participation in the protection, restoration, and maintenance of Chico's parks and greenways. The program develops a reliable and skilled network of volunteers who participate as Partners (various groups), Park Ambassadors, Team Leaders and Park Stewards.

The PALS Program Coordinator meets regularly with the Parks and Natural Resource Manager, the Public Works Director, Bidwell Park & Playground Commission (BPPC) members, and Park Staff to discuss and prioritize park projects and the immediate needs to be addressed. Identified volunteer projects and tasks are reviewed and defined as to:

- The length of time required for a project, short term vs. long term projects.
- The skill level or knowledge needed to successfully complete the task.
- An individual's or group's needs and reasons for volunteering.
- The appropriate time of year for tasks to be undertaken or projects conducted.
- The type of tools to be used for the project.

Volunteering in the Chico's parks and greenways

While volunteering, the main thing is to enjoy the park! PALS volunteers walk, bike, run, ride horses, remove litter and weeds, relax at their favorite spots or participate in many other activities that contribute to the care of Chico's parks and greenways. The idea is to be highly visible to park visitors to encourage stewardship. PALS carefully observe activities and conditions in the park. PALS are very helpful to park staff by providing information, utilizing Track it Forward, about common questions asked by visitors, hazards, graffiti, unsafe conduct, general maintenance needs, trail conditions, interesting observations and much more.

Park visitors will sometimes ask for information about the park or will need general assistance. PALS should have a basic knowledge of the natural features, history, layout and rules of the park. If the answer to the visitors' question is unknown, PALS will know the appropriate person to refer the visitor to.

Becoming a PALS Volunteer

PALS volunteer commitments and requirements can vary depending upon the specific program. In establishing procedures, policies, and guidelines for the volunteer program, the Parks Division seeks to:

- Provide a safe and high-quality volunteer program.
- Clarify the ways volunteers can help the Parks Division achieve its mission.
- Ensure that relationships between staff, volunteers, and the public are positive.

Volunteer Application, Waiver and Release

The Parks Division seeks to involve individuals whose skills, experience, and interest best match the established opportunities. To help obtain necessary information potential volunteers are asked to complete the required application. Applications and agreements are kept on file in the Human Resources Department.

All volunteers are required to sign a waiver and release form prior to working in City parks and greenways. Because the public perceives the decisions and actions of PALS volunteers as direct reflections of the Parks Division itself, potential volunteers complete the Volunteer Application indicating that he/she understands and agrees to the responsibilities, potential hazards, benefits, and other conditions of volunteering with the Parks Division.

For risk management purposes, to protect yourself and the Parks Division, the Parks Division does not permit anyone to begin volunteer work until the individual signs this document.

More information regarding risk management, liability, and safety issues are included in this guide. If at any time you have questions regarding any of the forms, please contact the park office or the human resources and risk management office.

Background Check

PALS volunteers potentially can have significant interaction with the public and children. PALS volunteers must pass a criminal background check that includes fingerprinting. This review is administered by the Chico Police Department. If a previously fingerprinted volunteer has been inactive for an extended amount of time and wishes to be reactivated in a volunteer position requiring fingerprints, the volunteer must be re-fingerprinted.

In addition, volunteers who have been fingerprinted elsewhere must be fingerprinted again for the Parks Division since privacy laws prohibit organizations from sharing results. The Parks Division provides volunteers with the necessary information and location for completion of the fingerprint check and covers the cost.

Volunteer Training

Each volunteer position has its own unique task that includes specific program training and safety procedures. For volunteers who participate in regularly scheduled volunteer sessions, training is generally provided at each project event and is specific to the project of that day. PALS go on a “walk along” with the PALS Program Coordinator before volunteering on their own.

Continuing education and enrichments will be offered as part of the volunteer program. Park staff encourages you to take full advantage of these opportunities to gain skills, socialize with fellow volunteers, and learn more about the valuable resources of the parks and greenways.

Conduct of PALS Volunteers

PALS volunteers must present a good appearance. PALS vests will be worn as the outermost layer of clothing while volunteering. The PALS, City of Chico ID should be visible or available while volunteering. Guns or weapons will not be worn or carried at any time. Volunteers will not wear PALS attire except while volunteering or attending a City sponsored event.

Volunteers will have a positive attitude, exemplified by polite and friendly behavior toward park visitors. A smile is always a good introduction to a park visitor.

Volunteers will display trail courtesy by yielding to other users of the trails, paths, and roads. Give plenty of room and proceed carefully when passing other trail users. These practices send a friendly message to park visitors and set a good example of responsible trail use.

Volunteers will not smoke, vape or be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while volunteering. Volunteers will follow the rules of the park, whether volunteering or not.

Membership in PALS volunteer service can be terminated at any time for violation of law or park rules, inappropriate conduct, misrepresentation or action that may reflect poorly on the City of Chico.

Volunteer Hours and Reporting Requirements

Four hours of volunteer time per month are required for active membership. The hours can be completed anytime within the month and certainly more hours are welcome. Every three months, PALS team members should reach out to the PALS Program Coordinator to get updates on what the member has been experiencing and to talk about projects and work being conducted. It is of extreme importance for PALS to keep in touch with the PALS Program Coordinator. Sickness, vacation, and job complications are legitimate reasons to miss hours or be temporarily inactive but the PALS Program Coordinator needs to be notified. Longer periods of inactivity also can be accommodated if notice is given.

A PALS volunteer who makes no such notification and does not schedule or upload volunteer hours for three consecutive months is considered inactive. After an additional three months of inactivity, the volunteer will be dropped from the PALS membership rolls and will be notified as such. Members who become inactive are expected to return their apparel and I.D. to the park office.

Track it Forward

Look for an email invitation from the PALS Program Coordinator to join Track it Forward. This program really helps with communications and reporting! Track it Forward can be accessed from a desktop or app on android or iPhone or on the volunteer calendar webpage.

Volunteer Calendar

The PALS Program Coordinator posts volunteer events regularly on the City of Chico website, park volunteer calendar. Always check the calendar prior to the work event to make sure that it has not been canceled due to weather; location has not been changed, etc. Website link can be found here <https://chico.ca.us/post/volunteer-calendar>

Description of Volunteer Positions

Partners – The City of Chico works closely with several partner organizations who have an ongoing park work relationship. Partners work under the guidance of the Assistant Parks and Natural Resources Manager and the Parks and Natural Resources Manager. Park Partners are responsible ensuring volunteer sign-in sheets are completed and submitted after each event.

Partners include; Friends of Comanche Creek Greenway, Chico Velo-Trailworks, Friends of Bidwell Park, Butte Environmental Council, the Mechoopda Indian Tribe, CA Native Plant Society- Lassen Chapter, The Stream Team, Community Action Volunteers in Education (CAVE) and many others.

Ambassadors – All PALS are park ambassadors. PALS can count their favorite park activities as volunteer hours if the volunteer is wearing PALS attire. Walking, biking, running, horse riding, relaxing at a favorite spot or participating in many other activities that contribute to the care of Chico's parks and greenways all count. The idea is to be highly visible to park visitors to encourage stewardship and foster a safe environment. PALS carefully observe activities and conditions in the park. PALS are very helpful to park staff by providing information about common questions asked by visitors, hazards, graffiti, unsafe conduct, general maintenance needs, trail conditions, interesting observations and much more.

Leaders – Leaders receive additional or specialized training to perform various tasks. Leaders may help facilitate volunteer weekly sessions, special group projects or large volunteer events. Leaders contact their team members quarterly to record hours and get updates on what their team members have been experiencing.

Stewards – This program is a perfect way for those who enjoy casual volunteerism. Only 4 hours a month are required. Stewards generally engage in litter and weed removal. All weed removal should be conducted with the guidance of the Assistant Parks and Natural Resources Manager.

PALS Newsletter – The PALS Program Coordinator sends the PALS newsletter. The newsletter is produced using the Constant Contact program and highlights park events and activities, park photos, meeting news, information from the park rangers and more.

General Park Volunteers - Individual or groups of volunteers who drop in that tend to prefer to focus on a certain project types or locations or who may be one-timers that are fulfilling a professional obligation, or school or service requirement. General park volunteers check in with the Assistant Parks and Natural Resources Manager, partner organization, or volunteer leader to sign in before any volunteer activity is performed.

Risk Management and Accident Reporting

Risk management evaluates safety risks involved in work and volunteer tasks. Park staff work together to minimize any potential risks to the volunteers. Before volunteers begin their service, leaders or supervisors are responsible for informing volunteers about safe work practices. Volunteers are required to follow safety guidelines and adhere to City policies.

Any injury to the volunteer or losses to any third party that involve a volunteer must be reported immediately and processed in accordance with City policies. If an accident occurs during a volunteer session, the Team Leader and the PALS Program Coordinator must fill out an accident report immediately. This report will be forwarded to the City's Risk Manager and may be used for insurance purposes.

Volunteer Protection Act of 1997: Public Law 105-19

A short summary of the US Senate Bill S 543 that became law on June 18, 1997:

Exempts a volunteer of a nonprofit organization or governmental entity from liability for harm caused by an act or omission of the volunteer on behalf of such organization or entity if: 1) the volunteer was acting within the scope of his/her responsibilities at the time; 2) the volunteer was properly licensed or otherwise authorized for the activities or practice in the State in which the harm occurred; 3) the harm was not caused by willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed; and 4) the harm was not caused by the volunteer operating a motor vehicle...or other vehicle for which the State required the operator or owner to possess an operator's license or maintain insurance...

Prohibits the award of punitive damages against a volunteer unless the claimant establishes by clear and convincing evidence that the harm was proximately caused by an action of such volunteer which constitutes willful or criminal misconduct or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed...

If a volunteer believes that knowledge of the complete law is necessary before becoming active, he/she should contact his/her US Senator or Congressional Representative for a copy.

Worksite Safety and Other Tips

Survey your worksite. Keep an eye out for potential hazards such as poison oak, yellow jackets/bees, hanging tree limbs, sharp objects and others.

Learn to identify poison oak at all times of the year. Look around your worksite and be sure to point it out to others.

Wear gloves when removing invasive plants. Some plants have sharp thorns (yellow star thistle, Himalayan blackberry) and others can cause a skin rash (English/Algerian ivy, yellow star thistle, American pokeweed and stinging nettle).

Wear gloves when picking up trash. Use trash grabbers picking up material when practical. Use extra caution when picking up items, like bedding and clothing. Hypodermic needles always should be placed in a sharps container for proper disposal.

Always wear closed-toe shoes, even when working in the creek.

Carry tools with sharp edge down and facing away from you. Keep at least 3' distance between you and others when carrying and using tools.

If you lay a tool down on the ground, turn the sharp edge down and put the tool in a place where someone won't trip or fall over it.

Minor volunteers (under 18 years of age) are not allowed to use axes, Pulaski, mattocks or hand-saws.

If you can't identify the plant you're planning to remove, ask the Assistant Parks and Natural Resources Manager or Team Leader to identify it before taking it out. When in doubt, leave it be. Take time to learn native plants. The Assistant Parks and Natural Resources Manager can provide a variety of identification tools.

Mosquitoes and West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus- What is it?

West Nile Virus is a mosquito-borne virus, carried in the female mosquito. Though fairly new to the United States (first detected in 1999 in New York City), West Nile Virus has been found for several years in Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

Who is affected by West Nile?

Humans and animals, including birds may be affected. The majority of infected people and animals have mild or no symptoms.

What are the symptoms of West Nile Virus infection?

Most people who are infected with the West Nile Virus will not experience any type of illness. Mild symptoms include fever, headache and body aches, and occasionally with a skin rash on the trunk of the body and swollen lymph glands. Symptoms of mild illness will generally last a few days. Severe symptoms of West Nile encephalitis or meningitis include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness and paralysis. Symptoms of severe illness may last several weeks, although neurological effects may be permanent. It is estimated that 1 in 150 persons infected with the West Nile Virus will develop a more severe form of the illness.

How is it spread?

West Nile Virus is normally spread to humans, animals, and birds through the bite of an infected mosquito. The mosquito first acquires the infection by feeding on a bird already infected with the virus.

Protect Yourself

The best way to avoid mosquito bites and any possible resulting infections or allergies is to avoid being bitten. Mosquitoes are most active at dawn, sunset, and early evening. Because their larvae can grow in any sort of standing water (from a mud puddle to a large pond), mosquitoes can survive in practically every environment. Here are some steps you can take to protect yourself from mosquito bites:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when you are outdoors.
- Place mosquito netting over strollers when you are outdoors with babies.
- Use insect repellents containing DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) or picaridin (KBR 3023) for the longest protection against mosquitoes. Read the label on the repellent, and use all products according to the manufacturer's directions for use.
- Consider staying indoors during peak mosquito-biting times.

Ticks and Lyme Disease

What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is a bacterial disease transmitted to humans and animals by the bite of a western black-legged tick. Not everyone who gets bitten by a tick will contract the disease, because only about 1 to 2 % of the adult western black-legged ticks in California are infected with the bacterium that causes the disease. Evidence indicates that the bacterium is usually not transmitted to humans until the tick has fed for at least several hours.

What should I do if I am bitten by a tick?

1. Grasp the tick with a tissue or tweezers, (not with your bare hands) as close to your skin as possible.
2. Gently pull the tick from the skin. Do not twist or "unscrew" the tick.
3. Apply an antiseptic to the bite area after removing the tick. Wash your hands.
4. Save the tick for identification. The Park Division will send the tick to the local Vector Control or health department to determine if the tick is one capable of transmitting Lyme disease.
5. If the tick cannot be removed or part of it is left in the skin, consult your physician. A normal reaction to a tick bite may include a small red or brown spot where the tick was embedded, and a swollen, tender area around the embedding point. This red, swollen area does not spread, and usually disappears within 2 to 3 days.

What are the symptoms and signs of Lyme disease?

An early sign of Lyme disease may include a spreading rash, which may be accompanied by fever, aches and/or fatigue. Possible late complications of the heart and/or nervous system may occur, as well as severe arthritis.

How can I protect myself from tick bites?

1. Wear long pants and long-sleeved clothing and shoes covering the toes.
2. Wear light colored clothing so ticks can be easily seen and removed.
3. Tuck pants into socks or boots, and shirt into pants.
4. Use insect repellent on shoes, socks, pants, and shirt
5. Thoroughly check yourself, your children, and your dog for ticks during or after returning from a hike.

Where and when are ticks found?

Generally, ticks can be found on grasses and brush in that receive afternoon shade. Ticks do not like sunny, open areas. Ticks feed on deer, rabbits, lizards, mice, and other animals. Ticks do not fly, jump, or drop from trees. They climb to the tips of vegetation, typically along animal trails or paths, and wait for an animal or human host to brush against them so they can attach themselves. Lyme disease can be contracted during any season of the year. Ticks feed at various times of the year, including winter. The adult ticks are usually seen November through April. The nymphal tick (an immature stage) is usually present early spring to late summer, peaking in mid to late May. Due to the smaller size of the nymphal tick and more outdoor activity by people, chances of an infectious tick bite are increased.

Poison Oak

Poison oak is one of the first CA native plants outdoor volunteers should learn to recognize. It grows in a variety of forms, from shrub, to vine, to ground cover. Commonly identifiable features are a triple leaf pattern, prominent veins, and shiny leaf surfaces. Coloration and growth habits vary by season and growing location (e.g. shady or sunny). In spring and summer the leaves are green, but during the fall and winter the leaves turn reddish and then fall to the ground, leaving just the stems, which are not easy to identify.

How does one contract poison oak?

You can get poison oak from contact with any part of the plant - leaves, bare stems, and even roots. The cause of the itchiness is urushiol, an oil that flows through the entire plant. You can also get poison oak from items that have come in contact with the plant.

What should I do if I come in contact with the plant?

People vary in the intensity of their allergic reactions to poison oak. Immune systems change over time; just because a person has not yet been afflicted does not mean they never will. If you come in contact with the plant, wash the affected area with cold water as soon as possible. Also wash any clothes or tools that have come in contact with it. Urushiol can remain potent on unwashed clothing for up to a year.

Rattlesnakes

The western rattlesnake is the only venomous snake native to the San Francisco Peninsula. It has a rather short body, seldom exceeding four feet. Its color varies from tan to gray, with a pattern of darker diamond shapes on its back. Other distinguishing characteristics are a thick, dull colored body, a triangular-shaped head, and rattles on the tail. This rattler is quite secretive and elusive and prefers to avoid contact with people.

Typically, it will only strike if stepped on or picked up. In this area, rattlesnakes are active from about April to October, and are most commonly seen in open grasslands, chaparral, and oak woodlands.

Some hints to help you avoid a rattlesnake bite:

- Stay on designated trails and scan the ground ahead as you walk.
- If you hear a rattling or buzzing sound nearby, stop and locate the source before moving on.
- Do not reach or step into bushes or behind logs or rocks where you cannot see.

Wear long pants and boots when hiking in rattlesnake country. If you do encounter a rattlesnake, give it a wide berth. It will usually move away when it becomes aware of your presence, but if it is in or near your path, just walk a wide loop around it. Remember, the snake is afraid of you more than you are afraid of it.

If you are bitten by a rattlesnake

- Try to remain calm.
- If you can, wash the wound.
- Keep the injured area as still as possible, and try to keep it lower than the heart.
- Get emergency help as soon as possible. It would be best if you could be carried, but if you must walk, walk slowly.
- Do not apply ice.
- Do not cut the wound.
- Do not apply a tourniquet.
- Do not administer any anti-venom-- wait for medical assessment and treatment.

Yellow Jackets and Wasps

Wasps are among the most beneficial insects around. They help control the population level of other insects by feeding on them. There are many different types of wasps. Some forms nest in the ground, usually in the burrow of a small mammal. Yellow jackets aggressively defend their nests, and most people are stung or bitten when they disturb a nest. If you observe yellow jackets flying in a vertical pattern, it is likely that they are flying to and from their nest. They are most active in late summer and fall. The feeding habits of yellow jackets can make them bothersome pests. Meats and sweets brought out on the trails will attract yellow jackets in large numbers. Swatting at them only makes them angry and more likely to sting or bite.

If you are stung or bitten by a yellow jacket or other wasp:

- Get away from the area as quickly as can be done safely.
- The wasp will not leave behind a stinger nor will it die after stinging.
- Wash the sting or bite site and ease the pain with ice, sting-kill, or baking soda paste.
- If you have an allergic reaction, seek medical help immediately.

Summary of Chico Parks & Greenways Regulations

Alcohol- Alcohol is not permitted in any City of Chico Park or Playground.

Bicycles- Bicycles must observe all California vehicular codes including one way streets. Riders are expected to be courteous and yield to equestrian and pedestrian traffic. Helmets must be worn always in Upper Park except when on pavement. Bicycle riding is not allowed in Caper Acres, on the pool deck or on the Yahi Trail. Safe and courteous riding is the Park standard.

Camping- No overnight camping allowed. All parks and greenways are "day use" only.

Campfires- No campfires allowed. You must have a permit to use the council campfire ring at the One Mile Recreation Area. Portable BBQ's may only be used next to existing BBQ's in Lower Park and at the Five Mile Recreation Areas.

Caper Acres- No entry by persons 13 years old or older unless accompanying a child under the age of 13. No bicycles allowed. No dogs allowed. Closed Mondays, except for holidays and will be closed the following Tuesday.

Dogs- Dogs may be off leash from 5:30 AM until 8:30 AM in Lower Park -- All other times dogs must be on a leash no longer than 6 ft. Along the north side of Upper Park Road, dogs may be "off leash" anytime. While "off leash", dogs must remain under effective voice control by the handler. Dogs are not allowed in the One-Mile swimming area, or other designated swimming hole. Doggie bag dispensers are located at many park entrances.

Feeding Animals- No feeding of wild or domestic animals. The only exceptions are the wildfowl at Horseshoe Lake and domestic dogs by their owners.

Firearms- or other projectile weapons are prohibited.

Fishing- Check California Fish and Wildlife Regulations for fishing in Big Chico Creek. Big Chico Creek is catch and release only, using barbless hooks and artificial lures. Fishing in Big Chico Creek is only allowed from Bear Hole to the Big Chico Ecological Reserve boundary at the north end of the Park. There is no fishing at any bridge or swimming area. Horseshoe Lake: age 14 and over, catch and release; under age 14, catch and keep 2 fish.

Gate Closures- Vehicle Gates at 7 pm. Oct.-March and 9 pm. April-Sept. Upper Park gate is closed at 9 pm. Oct.-March and 11 pm April-Sept and is closed on Sunday, Monday and during inclement weather. The gate at diversion Dam is closed to all vehicles.

Glass- No glass containers allowed in any park or greenway.

Horses- Horses must stay on designated trails. Horses are not allowed in One-Mile and Five Mile Recreation Areas, or the Yahi Trail. Horses must cross the creek at designated crossings

Hunting- No hunting or taking eggs.

Noise- No loud or unusual noises are allowed, including: radios and head sets that can be heard over 20' away unless it is an event approved in advance.

Park Closures- All City parks and greenways are closed from 11:00 pm until 5:00 am every day, unless visitor is directly and actively proceeding to a destination outside of the Park.

Smoking- No smoking or vaping in any park or greenway.

Swimming- While in the One-Mile swim area compliance with lifeguards and is required for public safety. Lifeguards are on duty from Memorial Day through Labor Day unless there is a swim advisory. Do not loiter on, play, sit, dive, or jump from any bridge, dam or spillway.

Trails- Please stay on designated trails. Due to erosion issues, the trails in Upper Bidwell Park are closed to bicycles and horses during wet conditions. Additionally, the Peregrine Point disc golf course is also closed to play during wet conditions.

Vegetation- No person shall destroy, injure, cut, or take any natural condition of the landscape, including, but not limited to, flowers, shrubbery, plants, vines, trees, grass, wood, or rocks, in or from any city park or playground. The exception to this would be volunteer activities for invasive species treatment, led by a PALS Team Lead or representative from the City.

Vehicles- Vehicle use is permitted on designated roads and in established parking areas. Do not block paths or trails with vehicle. Please obey posted signs and speed limits.

Waterways- No boats, rafts, etc. on Big Chico Creek. Inner tubes are allowed. Kayaks are allowed November 1st through April 30th. No motorized boat equipment on Horseshoe Lake.

Visitors to parks and greenways are there for a good time and generally want to be responsible guest. Friendly reminders or information sometimes needs to be provided to help visitors understand the importance of taking care of our parks and greenways. If a person is unreasonable back off completely and contact rangers or police.

Whenever someone's personal safety is at risk, call the Police Department. Here are some examples: unsafe acts, vehicle accident, fighting, weapons, serious injuries, etc. Unsure? always error on the side of safety and call 911.

Remember, your own safety is most important. Do not involve yourself in a dangerous situation and complicate matters. Rest assured 99% of your meetings with park visitors will be friendly and positive.

Some Dos and Do Nots

DO

Wear proper attire and display I.D.

Follow park rules, as you are an example

Have a good attitude

Call for assistance when needed

Pick up litter

Report any unusual happenings

Carry a cell phone, pen and paper

DO NOT

Argue with those who disagree with you

Become involved in any altercations

Take the law into your own hands

Do anything that would reflect poorly on the PALS Volunteer Program or City of Chico

Give inaccurate information

PALS are encouraged to explore all program aspects. Several PALS volunteers serve in multiple positions.

As a new PALS volunteer, you will be involved with many others who have a passion for contributing to the Chico community. Your feedback and experience is important to help ensure a successful volunteer program. You are highly encouraged to attend PALS meetings.

**Many thanks for your valuable contribution and to the health and
“Doin’ your part for Chico’s parks!”**

History and Future of Bidwell Park

Mechoopda

Bidwell Park resides upon sacred lands of the Mechoopda Tribe that have stewarded this land since time immemorial. This land has sustained the Mechoopda people and continue to do so today.

For countless generations before Euro-American settlement, the Mechoopda—part of the larger Maidu linguistic and cultural group—lived within the Eskenim Séwi (Butte Creek) Watershed, Ótakim Séwi (Big Chico Creek) Watershed, Siʔim Séwi (Pine Creek) Watershed, and the Séwote:m Séwi (Sacramento River).

The Mechoopda thrived through a diverse hunting and gathering economy, skillfully stewarding, managing, and harvesting the region's rich resources, including elk, deer, rabbits, salmon, waterfowl, acorns, seeds, bulbs, and greens. Acorns, their staple food, could be stored for up to two years, while varied seasonal harvests protected them from famine. They excelled in basketry—both functional and artistic—crafting durable baskets made from local plants, with each piece reflecting the maker's identity and skill. Mechoopda Tribal members continue to practice indigenous land stewardship & cultural practices today.

The first sustained Euro-American contact came in the early 1800s, when trappers, explorers, and settlers entered Mechoopda lands. Epidemics, including a devastating malaria outbreak in the 1830s, sharply reduced the population.

By 1850, following John Bidwell's acquisition of the Spanish Land Grant, Rancho Arroyo Chico, the Mechoopda moved to a former summer camp site located on the south side of Chico Creek near First and Flume Streets in what is now downtown Chico. A few years later the village was moved downstream, closer to Bidwell's residence. In 1868, the village was moved ½ mile west to its final location, eventually becoming the Chico Rancheria.

The Mechoopda Tribe was wrongfully terminated during the Era of Termination in the mid-20th century, but through a successful lawsuit against the U.S. Government in 1986, Mechoopda became re-recognized as a federally recognized tribe in 1992.

If you are interested about learning more about the rich history of the Mechoopda Tribe, please visit their website: <https://www.mechoopda-nsn.gov/>

Bidwell

John Bidwell first saw the Chico area in March 1843, by which time the place name "Chico Creek" was already in use. Under provisions of Mexican law, Arroyo Chico was granted by California Governor Manuel Micheltorena to William Dickey the following year. In two separate purchases in 1849 and 1851, Bidwell acquired Rancho del Arroyo Chico, totaling more than 22,000 acres. During this period, he forged close but unequal ties with the Mechoopda. Many Mechoopda lived and worked on Rancho Arroyo Chico, forming the main labor force. Bidwell, while a landowner and employer, also sheltered the tribe from militia violence, notably intervening in 1863 to protect them from forced relocation during countywide removals.

John Bidwell led a varied and eventful life, serving (among other things) as Chico Postmaster, member of the US House of Representatives, and officer in the California militia. He married Annie Ellicott Kennedy in 1868. An ardent Prohibitionist, her influence appears in the no-alcohol provisions of the various Bidwell leases and grants. Bidwell died at age 81 in 1900, followed by Annie Bidwell in 1918 at 78 years of age.

Growth of the Park

On July 10, 1905, Annie Bidwell signed a grant deed donating 1,903 acres to the people of Chico for a public park. She said at the time that this grant followed the desire of her late husband, expressed for some time before his death. On May 11, 1911, she signed an indenture granting a further 302 acres of park land mainly along the north side of Upper Park to become effective upon her death. Approximately 37 acres were added to the Park in October 1921 when the "Forestry Station" parcel (now the site of Chico Creek Nature Center and the oak grove) was purchased from the University of. Another 20 acres, the "Kennedy Estate field" (now the walnut orchard on North Park Drive), were added in the 1930s or 1940s. The City added another 1,420 acres, 40 of which were US Bureau of Land Management land, on May 16, 1995.

Reversionary Rights

Annie Bidwell's grants of park land to the City contained several conditions: no alcohol; land must be used as a public park; preserve the trees, shrubs, and vines; no hunting; and no public picnics on Sundays. If these conditions were "broken or disregarded", title to the park land would revert to her heirs. The no-alcohol provision was standard in all the Bidwell deeds, including those for investment property. Following a court decision holding that the reversionary rights are property, they were sold in 1934 to satisfy estate debts. The Title Insurance and Guaranty Co. of San Francisco purchased all the reversionary rights, which were sold as a single package. The company was interested in the investment properties, but, almost as an afterthought, thus also acquired the reversionary rights to Bidwell Park. The company deeded the Park rights, in which it was not interested, to the City by quitclaim in 1948.

Park Roads

BPPC minutes of July 1935 note that the new road through the "Upper Area" of Bidwell Park was to be graveled. North Park Drive, considered controversial at the time of its construction, was built in 1939. The road that now forms the main access to Upper Park was rerouted in 1955 so as to pass between the golf course and the rifle range. At that time, it was called "the alternate canyon road", it did not have an asphalt surface; the principal road access was across the Five Mile area. As part of the construction of the Five-Mile flood-control complex (1964-69) the "alternate" road became the main access route. In September 1993 the main road was rerouted near the golf course in order to allow modification of two holes of the course.

Iron Canyon

The dramatic, basalt-etched gorge just east of Bear Hole in Upper Bidwell Park, Iron Canyon became a fish migration barrier after a massive rockfall around 1906. To restore passage, a project including ten dams was completed in 1958. Today, that structure is obsolete—the Iron Canyon Fish Passage Project, led by CalTrout in collaboration with community and tribal partners, will remove the defunct fishway, reshape the creek's boulder field into a natural "step-pool" fishway, and open nearly nine miles of upstream habitat to salmon and steelhead. Slated for completion by 2027, this culturally informed restoration honors the creek's indigenous heritage while restoring ecological resilience for native fish.

A Flume, a Dam, and a Ditch

In the early 1870s, the Butte Flume and Lumber Company built a flume along Big Chico Creek to transport lumber from Butte Meadows. A small settlement called Oakvale formed near the flume's end but gradually disappeared as the flume was extended west into Chico.

Later, a diversion dam and ditch were constructed just east of Bear Hole to supply water to Horseshoe Lake for the municipal golf course. Although the exact date the dam was finished is unclear, records show ongoing repairs and plans through the 1940s and 50s.

By the late 1960s, the ditch had fallen out of use and was transformed into a hiking trail, which visitors can still enjoy today while exploring the scenic canyon.

Day Camp, Archery Range, and Yahí Trail

The Day Camp and archery range were located about one-third mile east of the eastern high-power line in Upper Park. An archery club established a target range there in 1946. The City's Recreation Department started a five-week summer "day school," called Camp Cha-Da-Ka, near the archery range, in cooperation with Chico State Teachers College. Another archery group expanded the range in 1957. The site declined and fell out of use by the early 1970s.

In 1967, permission was granted to build the 6-mile Yahí Trail, starting at Day Camp and extending near Salmon Hole. Due to the 1970s gas crisis, Day Camp relocated to the Five-Mile area in 1973 to reduce travel distances.

Rifle Range, Golf Course, and Horseshoe Lake

Two rifle ranges once operated near Horseshoe Lake. The older range, built in 1926 for the local military, was leased to the National Guard for six years. Conflicts over usage arose between the Guard and local gun clubs. A skeet shooting area was established in 1936 and a permanent site in 1948. A “small-bore” rifle range was built in 1950 but the large-bore range was deactivated in 1958. Rifle and skeet range use declined through the 1980s. A pistol range south of the golf course was built in 1953-54 for the Chico Police Department and military units but was discontinued in the 1970s.

The 9-hole Municipal Golf Course south of Horseshoe Lake dates back to at least 1921. The clubhouse was rebuilt several times, and an additional nine holes were added east of the original course between 1954-57. Two holes of the old course were altered in 1993, affecting park access roads.

Horseshoe Lake, once called Park Lake or Park Reservoir, was formed by a WPA dam built in the late 1930s. A spillway dam was added in the late 1950s to better control water flow.

The Easter Cross

A wooden cross at its current site was vandalized in 1958 and replaced by a local group. Ten years later, it was replaced by a steel cross made from a surplus light standard. In 1958, a dirt soapbox derby track was built nearby but was closed in the 1970s due to erosion.

Five-Mile Area

The first Five-Mile dam was built around 1859 to supply water to Bidwell’s flour mill. A sheep camp and dressing rooms for bathers were located nearby. The "Hooker Oak Swimming Pool" name was adopted in 1925. From 1964-69, the area was closed for flood control improvements, including a new dam, picnic sites, and a footbridge. Access roads were also modified.

Hooker Oak

This famous valley oak, named after botanist Sir Joseph Hooker, once had a 500-foot branch circumference. Half of the tree fell in 1962, with the rest falling in 1977 despite preservation efforts. The area was used as a hayfield and prune orchard, and later developed as a recreation area with softball fields leased to CARD for 25 years starting in 1958.

Live Oak Grove

Located between the Five-Mile diversion channel and Manzanita Avenue access road, this grove hosted a junior car racing track built in 1955 and a motorcycle track in 1958, both discontinued by 1966. The access road to Upper Park once passed through here.

Riding Arena

Horse-riding groups sought a riding arena starting in 1953. The current site west of Live Oak Grove was selected by 1958, with a temporary arena built in the late 1960s. It fell out of use in the 1970s but has since been rebuilt.

Freeway and Power Lines

Two high-voltage power lines cross Upper Park—one built by the US Bureau of Reclamation in 1944 near the Easter Cross, and another by PG&E in 1964 near the golf course. Both were installed despite opposition. The freeway was constructed between 1963-65, despite formal resolutions against it by the park commission.

Forestry Station and Kennedy Tract

John Bidwell donated about 37 acres in 1888 for a forestry station, which later became part of the University of California's forestry experiments before the City purchased it in 1921. The site housed maintenance facilities, a small zoo (1954-58), deer pens, and the Chico Creek Nature Center (built in the 1980s). The "World of Trees" nature trail was established in 1976.

The Kennedy Tract, about 20 acres with walnut orchards, was added to the park before 1950.

One-Mile Area

The dam creating the "4th Street" swimming pool was built in 1923-24. The Chico Art Club named the pools "Sycamore" and "Hooker Oak." The Sycamore Pool fish ladder was built in 1957 to aid fish migration. Caper Acres, a volunteer-built garden, was developed in the 1950s.

Looking Ahead: Community Stewardship and Partnerships

Bidwell Park continues to be a beloved natural and cultural gem in Chico, offering space for recreation, education, and connection with the environment. The Park's care and upkeep are made possible through the dedication of many partners, including the PALS program, whose volunteers contribute countless hours maintaining trails, managing habitats, controlling invasive species, and supporting public education.

The Park's Vegetation Management Plan helps guide efforts to preserve native plants, improve wildlife habitat, and maintain the health of this diverse landscape.

Looking to the future, Bidwell Park's success depends on continued collaboration among a wide range of community partners—including city agencies, volunteer groups, environmental organizations, and the Mechoopda Tribe.

With strong partnerships and active community involvement, Bidwell Park will remain a vibrant and resilient place where people and nature thrive together for generations to come.