



CITY OF CHICO
BIDWELL PARK AND PLAYGROUND COMMISSION (BPPC)
NATURAL RESOURCE COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting Agenda
September 13, 2016, 6:00 p.m.
Municipal Center - 421 Main Street, Conference Room 1

Materials related to an item on this Agenda are available for public inspection in the Park Division Office at 411 Main Street, 3rd floor during normal business hours or online at <http://www.chico.ca.us/>.

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. REGULAR AGENDA -

2.1. Trails Plan Priorities for Bidwell Park: Upper Park Road

This item continues public input in updating Bidwell Park's Trail Plan as recommended under the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan (BPMMP). The Natural Resources Committee (NRC) will consider the uses of the gravel portion of Upper Park Road to assess if the current policies and approaches are adequate. A companion effort is underway to assess the condition of the road and provide remedies and costs; however, this effort concentrates on the policies related to the road. Staff recommends that the NRC follow the process used for trails priorities, and provide input on 1) Problems, 2) Attributes and 3) Priorities, Remedies, and Specific Actions. This input will influence the development of a policy that will return to the NRC and will be incorporated into the Trails Plan. **Recommendation:** Provide input on proposed options priorities.

3. BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Members of the public may address the Committee at this time on any matter not already listed on the agenda, comments are limited to three minutes. The Committee cannot take any action at this meeting on requests made under this section of the agenda.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourn to the next regular meeting on October 11, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference Room 1, Chico Municipal Center Building (421 Main Street, Chico, California).



Please contact the Park Division Office at (530) 896-7800 if you require an agenda in an alternative format or if you need to request a disability-related modification or accommodation. This request should be received at least three working days prior to the meeting.



DATE: 9/8/16
TO: Natural Resource Committee
FROM: Dan Efseaff, Parks and Natural Resources Manager
SUBJECT: Trails Plan Priorities for Bidwell Park: Upper Park Road

Report in Brief

This item continues public input in updating Bidwell Park's Trail Plan as recommended under the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan (BPMMP). The Natural Resources Committee (NRC) will consider the uses of the gravel portion of Upper Park Road to assess if the current policies and approaches are adequate. A companion effort is underway to assess the condition of the road and provide remedies and costs; however, this effort concentrates on the policies related to the road. Staff recommends that the NRC follow the process used for trails priorities, and provide input on 1) Problems, 2) Attributes and 3) Priorities, Remedies, and Specific Actions. This input will influence the development of a policy that will return to the NRC and will be incorporated into the Trails Plan. **Recommendation:** *Provide input on proposed options priorities.*

Background

In 2012, the Natural Resource Committee made progress on input on elements needed to update Bidwell Park's Natural Resources Management Plan and on the development of a Trails Plan for the Park. The Committee reviewed drafts of management units and a trails inventory for Bidwell Park. Staff anticipated several meetings to consider various elements of the Natural Resource Management and Trails Plan. Progress was halted with staff layoffs in 2013, but efforts resumed in 2015.

a. Policy

Since at least the 1990's, Upper Park Road (Attachment A) was reserved for hiking, biking, and equestrians only on Sundays and Mondays (closed to vehicles). The gate at the Horseshoe Lake Parking Lot (E) opened to vehicles Tuesday through Saturday starting at 7:30 am and closed at 9 pm in summer and 7 pm in winter. Because of safety concerns and damage to the road, the gate at the Diversion Dam was open during the peak season from May 1 to October 31 (closed November 1 to April 30). Wet conditions during the peak season would close the gate. The road was typically graded prior to the peak season.

Other policies also govern the opening of the road. In 2012, Parks formalized the operating procedure for the closure of Upper Park Road associated with "Red Flag" or fire events. As part of the 2015 Adaptive Wet Weather Plan, the BPPC adopted the protocol (Attachment B) that "the Road will remain closed to vehicles (open to pedestrians, bikers, and equestrians) when Upper Park trails are closed." In essence, this approach provided an alternative to non-motorized uses when the closed trails, without the hazards of vehicles.

b. Damage and Closure

In December 2012, a severe storm (2.26 inches in one day followed by 4.75 inches over a 4 day period) damaged several sections of Upper Park Road past Horseshoe Lake. While the Parks Division was later able to re-grade and add road base along a section of the road from Horseshoe Lake to the Diversion Dam base to allow visitor traffic; staff kept the section beyond that point closed because of the narrowed road width, roadway incision, and lack of road base. Staff was concerned that any partial repairs would loosen the road substrate, causing erosion and exacerbate existing damage. The road from Horseshoe Lake to the Diversion Dam is only 1.7 miles, but contains 72% (146) of the total parking spaces (202). Fifty-six (56) parking spots are located in the 2.3 miles from the Diversion Dam to the end of the road.

Over the years, the road had degraded to the point of not being sustainable or maintainable with available resources. The storm exposed these deficiencies in a dramatic fashion. Limited City budgets have meant that very little road base could be used and past practices, lack of maintenance, and the road configuration (much of the road base in sections have washed away to bedrock, and many of the 60 some culverts are unusable). To protect resources and conserve limited budget resources, the City could not justify the costs of repair and road base if it was likely to wash away and further damage resources and has kept the road closed until comprehensive, sustainable evaluation could be completed.

The City is developing a Scope of Work for a project to develop options for a more sustainable, safe, cost-effective road that meets modern forest road standards. Phase I will conduct topography, botanical, wetland, and archeological surveys of the road; initiate permitting and compliance; develop sustainable designs that reduce maintenance costs; meet environmental and water quality goals; and estimate costs and timelines. The completion of Phase I will allow for accurate cost estimates. Phase II will include re-grading; installation of new crossings, culverts, gravel, gates, barriers, and signs. Phase II may proceed in sections as funding permits.

Strongly intertwined with that effort is consideration of the type of road and uses that Upper Park Road should support. The NRC will consider the longer-term policy questions of the road.

Discussion

At the meeting, staff will provide a description of the road.

a. Master Plan Guidance

Consideration of the uses of the road appear well connected to the Trails Plan. As per the Bidwell Park Master Management Plan (BPMMP), the Trails Plan will serve as a guide for future trail maintenance, improvement, construction, and closure within Bidwell Park. It will also help prioritize budget expenditures and ensure that future improvements are consistent with the vision, goals, and objectives set forth in the BPMMP (EDAW 2008). The Trails Plan helps ensure that any work implemented is consistent with the Vision for Bidwell Park as well as the goals and objectives set forth in the BPMMP. The BPMMP also considers some objectives directly pertaining to Upper Park Road and the following items may help guide the NRC consideration of this matter.

O. Upper-10. Appropriately manage and maintain Upper Park Road including but not limited to the following:

- Reduce potential conflicts between users;
- Investigate ways to more efficiently maintain Upper Park Road;
- Improve access to Upper Park via improved parking and roads;
- Consider alternatives to private vehicles for access into Upper Park;

I. Upper-15. A feasibility/policy analysis should be conducted addressing options and future needs for Upper Park Road. The analysis would address costs, potential impacts, options and preferred outcomes to the current management of the road. In addition, if the road is to be kept open, the analysis should address what would be required to maintain public safety and maintenance at acceptable levels. Additional considerations would include:

- Evaluate options for the current management of Upper Park Road and use of private vehicles;
- Establish design and maintenance standards for unpaved roads;
- Evaluate costs and positive and negative effects of extending public transportation into Upper Park;
- Consider public transportation between upper Horseshoe Lake parking lot and Upper Park destinations, including turnaround options;
- Consider seasonal (e.g., summer) or year-round closure of Upper Park Road to private vehicles;
- Consider need for grading, surfacing and drainage improvements to Upper Park Road;
- Consider features to accommodate and reduce conflicts between vehicles, and other users, primarily hikers, cyclists, and equestrians;
- Consider reduction, elimination, and restoration of other parking areas in Upper Park;
- Evaluate cost-benefits, including financial savings from reduced needs for regular road and drainage maintenance.

b. Policy Approach

To address this issue, staff recommends a similar approach as with the developing the trails objectives. Staff will look for NRC feedback and "brainstorming" on:

- 1) List Problems,
- 2) Identify Attributes
- 3) Develop Priorities, Remedies, and Specific Actions, and
- 4) Identify information needs and data gaps.

Staff will compile this information and then present alternatives for consideration at a future NRC.




Attachments:

- A. Upper Park Trails Map
- B. Excerpt from Adaptive Wet Weather Plan (Revised 2015).



Distribution: BPPC and trail user email list-serve.

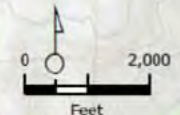
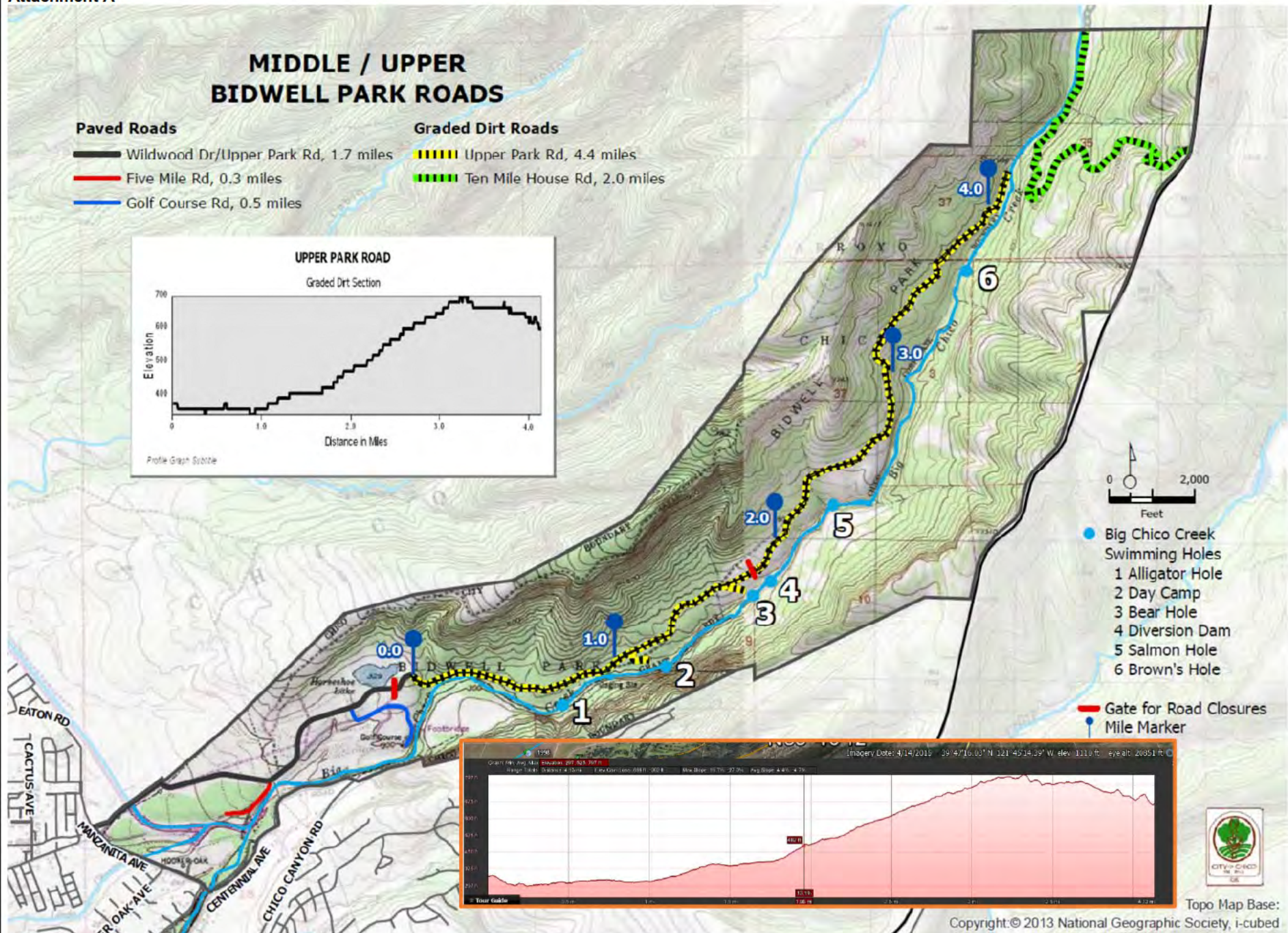
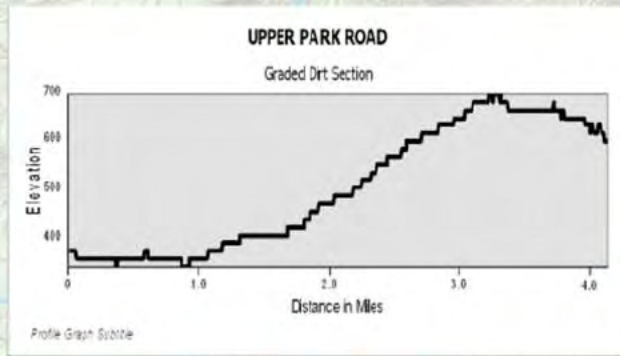
MIDDLE / UPPER BIDWELL PARK ROADS

Paved Roads

-  Wildwood Dr/Upper Park Rd, 1.7 miles
-  Five Mile Rd, 0.3 miles
-  Golf Course Rd, 0.5 miles

Graded Dirt Roads

-  Upper Park Rd, 4.4 miles
-  Ten Mile House Rd, 2.0 miles



-  Big Chico Creek Swimming Holes
- 1 Alligator Hole
- 2 Day Camp
- 3 Bear Hole
- 4 Diversion Dam
- 5 Salmon Hole
- 6 Brown's Hole
-  Gate for Road Closures
-  Mile Marker



Attachment B

Excerpt from:

City of Chico. 2015. Adaptive Wet Weather Trail Management Plan (Revised 2015). Bidwell Park, Chico, California. December 3, 2015. Public Works Department, Parks Division. Chico, California.

D. Wet Weather Policy for Upper Park Road

Historically, the unpaved portion of Upper Park Road (past Parking Lot E/Horseshoe Lake) is closed during and following inclement weather. Upper Park Road is closed on Sundays and Mondays to vehicles.

Upper Park Road is a thinly graveled surface with poor drainage in places. During and after rain events, vehicles on the road cause considerable damage (rutting) and can slide off the road. To ensure safety, protect against road degradation and reduce costs associated with maintenance Upper Park Road is closed when wet.

When trails are closed, park users are allowed on Upper Park Road for recreational activities. For purposes of the code, Upper Park Road is considered a trail when the road is closed to vehicles; however, horses and bikes are permitted to use Upper Park Road.

The current policy may be articulated as follows:

1. The gate at the Diversion Dam will be seasonally closed from November 1st to April 30th annually.
2. An assessment of road conditions should occur daily during wet conditions, before 7:30 am.
3. When more than 0.25 inches of precipitation falls within a 24-hour period or if tire impressions are evident while driving on the road, the road shall be closed to vehicles. |
4. If the National Weather Service indicates a 70% chance or greater of precipitation that day, the road will be closed to vehicles.
5. The Road will remain closed to vehicles (open to pedestrians, bikers, and equestrians) when Upper Park trails are closed.
6. To open, the surface should be firm with few puddles present.
7. In addition, emergency, weather damage, or special circumstances or events may warrant closures at the discretion of Parks Staff.

The policy tracks fairly closely with the current trail closure, except that conditions typically dry more rapidly than the trails and the road opens earlier. Item number 5 is new and based on BPPC direction following the 2011-2012 review.

We recommended modification of the protocol so that the opening of Upper Park Road is tied into the trails assessment. In other words, when Middle and Upper Park Trails are closed to ~~bikes~~ and equestrians, the Upper Park Road is closed to vehicles. Reasons for this change include:

1. Consistency and easier communication to the public.
2. When the trails are closed, more ~~bikes~~ and equestrians use Upper Park Road; removing cars may improve safety and trail closure compliance (some offenders say that they did not feel safe on the road and use the trails).
3. Allows for more centralized access points: Minimizes use of parking areas deeper in the Park (i.e. Bear Hole), when trails are wet, and removes the temptation to bring in a bike in a vehicle to access closed trails in Upper Park.