

## 3 PARK PLAN

### 3.1 PURPOSE AND VISION

The purpose and vision of a State Park serve as the framework for future management of the Park. They are related, yet distinct, planning concepts that provide a context and direction for future planning efforts for the Park. These concepts are described in more detail below.

#### 3.1.1 DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

The Declaration of Purpose describes the purpose of the Park and is the broadest statement of management goals designed to fulfill the vision for the Park. A Declaration of Purpose is required by the Public Resources Code, Section 5002.2(b), “setting forth specific long-range management objectives for the Park consistent with the Park’s classification...”

The California Department of Parks and Recreation (Department) General Plan Policy Committee adopted the Park’s current Declaration of Purpose in October 2000 in the absence of a formal General Plan that provides the framework for future Park management. It reads as follows:

##### Existing Declaration of Purpose

*“The purpose of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park, in Butte and Glenn Counties, is to preserve and protect a variety of sites which collectively display various stages of the evolving hydrologic conditions and the shifting types of associated riparian ecosystems which occur in the middle reaches of the Sacramento River. The unit features high terrace riparian vegetation with mature oak woodland and an under-story of mixed grasslands. The unit provides important regional access for a wide range of recreational uses of the Sacramento River and certain of its local tributaries.*

*California State Parks will preserve, protect, restore, interpret and manage the unit’s natural, cultural, aesthetic and scenic resources, features and values, making them available to the public for their educational, inspirational and recreational benefits.”*

During the General Plan planning process, it was evident that the existing purpose statement needed modification to more clearly and succinctly reflect the Park’s current purpose as defined by this General Plan. The new purpose statement is intended to reflect current conditions, including knowledge of the resources at the Park, planning actions being undertaken in the project area, and the understood significance and value of the Park with respect to California and the State Park system. The Park’s purpose has also been defined to balance the natural, cultural, and recreational resources in a manner that sustains these resources for the people of California. The proposed Declaration of Purpose for Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park reads as follows:

## Proposed Declaration of Purpose

*“The purpose of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park is to preserve, protect, and restore a variety of sites which collectively display various stages of the evolving hydrologic conditions and the successional riparian ecosystems which occur in the middle reaches of the Sacramento River, while providing important public access for a wide range of recreational, interpretive, and educational uses of the Sacramento River and its local tributaries.”*

### **3.1.2 VISION STATEMENT**

The Vision Statement for Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park is a description of what the Park should ultimately look like in the future. Prior to this General Plan, no vision had been developed for the Park. As part of the General Plan process, a vision for the Park has been developed based on the shared vision of the Department and coordination with local stakeholders. The Vision Statement for Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park reads as follows:

*“The Park will provide quality recreational and educational opportunities, afforded by the dynamic riverine environment of the middle reaches of the Sacramento River and the history of the area. Public access to the river will be provided to all visitors who enjoy boating, rafting, floating, swimming, wading, fishing, viewing, and learning experiences at the Park. The Park will also offer biking, hiking, and camping opportunities, in connection with surrounding public lands. The Park and its recreational and educational facilities will be developed and expanded sustainably and safely, in consideration of the Park’s resources and capacity to accommodate the needs of the diverse stakeholders.*

*State Park staff will preserve and enhance the outstanding recreational and educational values of the Park. Recognizing its ecological and historical importance, the natural and cultural resources will be restored and protected, considering the expressed desires of the public and in accordance with established laws and regulations. The Park will provide interpretation of its resources and their significance in concert with the nearby Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park. Visitors will also have the opportunity to learn about the relationship between the river and the agricultural tradition of the region.*

*The Park is one of the last remnants of the historically extensive Sacramento River riparian system. The successional riparian forest and its abundant biodiversity will be maintained in their natural and native state. The river will be allowed to meander, to the extent compatible with existing land uses. Developments in the Park will be designed to accommodate naturally occurring floods. Through the Park’s interpretive and educational facilities and programs, visitors, such as school groups, will learn about the dynamic nature of the Sacramento River and the way it shapes the ever-changing landscape and the surrounding land uses.*

## 3.2 PARK-WIDE MANAGEMENT GOALS AND GUIDELINES

Park-wide management goals and guidelines, which are applicable to the entire Park regardless of subunit purpose and/or location, are management approaches for achieving the Declaration of Purpose and Vision Statement described above. Goals and guidelines are defined in the California State Parks Planning Handbook (2002):

- ▶ **Goal:** General, overall, and ultimate purpose, aim or intent toward which management will direct effort. Goals are not necessarily measurable except in terms of the achievement of component objectives which attainment of the goal involves.
- ▶ **Guidelines:** General set of parameters that provide directions toward accomplishing goals.

The goals and guidelines for Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park are organized into three main categories: (1) environmental resource management, (2) visitor use and opportunities, and (3) administration and operations. These components must be integrated with one another for successful implementation of the General Plan. Because of the broad nature of these categories, they are further organized into issue and sub-issue areas addressing specific aspects of the planning process.

### 3.2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

The abundance of environmental resources was one key consideration for establishing the Park into the State Park system, and wise stewardship of the Park's resources is crucial in retaining and sustaining its biological, historic, aesthetic, educational, and recreational values. In balancing the needs of the dynamic ecosystem with those of Park visitors and Department staff, the complex natural processes that occur within the Park demand that a wide range of environmental resources be considered in future management decisions. For purposes of this Plan, the management of environmental resources at the Park refers to four main resource topics: (1) ecosystem (plant and wildlife) management, (2) cultural resources, (3) watershed management, and (4) scenic resources.

### PARK-WIDE GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

The natural resources of the Park are shaped and supported by the physical and hydrological patterns of the Sacramento River and Big Chico Creek. This relationship between physical features and patterns and biological resources is a dynamic system with complex, interdependent relationships. In a natural system, these processes are allowed to occur without interference, but they are often altered or interrupted by human influence. The following natural resource management approach is designed to perpetuate the natural processes and patterns at work in the Park and to restore such processes to optimal levels in areas where they have been disrupted by human alteration and non-compatible uses.

**Overall Goal ER-1:** Preserve, maintain and, where necessary, rehabilitate the Park's ecosystems to protect natural features and processes and perpetuate biological resource functions.

- ▶ **Guideline ER-1-1:** Inventory and monitor the condition of the Park's natural resources and identify appropriate management measures for their preservation and opportunities for enhancement and restoration.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1-2:** Conduct scientific research with as little manipulation and/or disturbance as possible, with the intent of gaining a better understanding of methods for conserving sensitive species and ecosystems.

### **Sensitive Riparian Habitat and Other Plant Communities**

Sensitive natural communities include communities that are of special concern to government agencies and private conservation organizations. Sensitive natural communities are considered important because they provide habitat for numerous wildlife and plant species including special-status species. Sensitive natural communities also include those considered rare or uncommon locally, regionally, or statewide, and those protected by state and federal laws and regulations. Sensitive natural communities that occur in the plan area include open water, wetland, and successional woodland communities, such as arroyo willow series, box elder, Fremont cottonwood series, and valley oak series.

**Goal ER-1.1:** Protect and restore sensitive natural communities, including wetland, valley oak woodland, and other successional riparian woodland plant communities that support the Park's abundant natural resources and function in the evolving hydrological and geomorphologic conditions of the middle reaches of the Sacramento River.

- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.1-1:** Restore natural processes and functions to parcels acquired for habitat values based on a comprehensive Natural Resource Management Plan.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.1-2:** Landscape developed areas with plants native to local area.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.1-3:** Protect natural and dynamic hydrological, physical, and biological processes and conditions of the river corridor to enable continued succession of plant community types.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.1-4:** Maintain riparian habitat areas that are representative of the major successional stages.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.1-5:** Protect mature oak trees and oak stands from direct or indirect damage by avoiding their removal for new facilities and implementing practices to prevent disease, such as sudden oak death syndrome.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.1-6:** Avoid sensitive riparian habitat when siting and designing proposed facilities to the extent feasible. Where development occurs in sensitive

riparian habitat, minimize impacts to the extent feasible and seek opportunities for habitat restoration elsewhere at the Park.

- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.1-7:** Support efforts to restore the Big Chico Creek Watershed such that ecosystem functions at the Park are improved, thereby enhancing special-status species and sensitive habitats that occur at the Park.

### **Special-Status Plant, Terrestrial Wildlife, and Aquatic Species**

Special-status species include plant, terrestrial wildlife, and aquatic species that are legally protected or that are otherwise considered sensitive by federal, state, or local resource conservation agencies and organizations. These include species that are state and/or federally listed as Rare, Threatened, or Endangered; those considered as candidates or proposed for listing; species identified by CDFG and/or USFWS as species of concern; and plants considered by the California Native Plant Society to be rare, threatened, or endangered. A number of special-status species are known, or have potential, to occur in the Park (please refer to Section 2: Existing Conditions).

**Goal ER-1.2:** Manage for the perpetuation of special-status plant, terrestrial wildlife, and aquatic species within the Park, in accordance with state and federal laws.

- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.2-1:** Monitor the distribution, extent, and condition of special-status species populations within the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.2-2:** Protect special-status species to the degree necessary to maintain or enhance their populations within the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.2-3:** Enhance and/or restore special-status species habitat where feasible and compatible with established Park uses.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.2-4:** Provide special protection for federally and state-listed threatened and endangered species as required by state and federal laws and regulations.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.2-5:** Implement appropriate measures to avoid or minimize impacts to special-status species from maintenance activities, facility development, visitor use, and other Park actions, as required by state and federal resource protection laws and regulations. These may include, but not be limited to, avoidance of construction activities and vegetation removal during bird nesting seasons; alignment of trails to minimize vegetation removal; implementation of buffer areas around sensitive resources; and timing restrictions for in-water construction to avoid disruption of fish migration, spawning, and rearing periods.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.2-6:** Educate Park visitors regarding special-status species protection and management activities.

## Non-Native Invasive Species

Non-native invasive plant species (i.e., invasive weeds) can dominate native plant communities or open water areas and degrade fish and wildlife habitat, resulting in a decline in native species diversity and abundance. Invasive weeds can further threaten natural resources and developed areas by damaging adjacent farm crops, causing increased fire incidence and intensity, or increasing flooding and erosion. Feral cats and other non-native mammals (e.g., black rats) can have a substantial negative effect on native wildlife populations. Feral cats prey heavily on native wildlife, particularly small and medium sized birds and mammals. Black rats have been documented as the primary predators of bird nests in some riparian habitats in northern California. The numbers of invasive or problematic plant and wildlife species can be increased by incompatible management actions and visitor uses.

**Goal ER-1.3:** Reduce the presence of invasive non-native plant species.

- ▶ **Guideline ER- 1.3-1:** Control or eliminate federally and state-listed noxious weeds, noxious weeds listed on California Invasive Plant Council’s list: “Exotic Pest Plants of Greatest Ecological Concern in California,” and other invasive weeds that can result in degradation to native plant and wildlife habitat in the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.3-2:** Reduce the extent and prevent the spread of all invasive weeds to obtain maximum habitat diversity where feasible.

**Goal ER-1.4:** Reduce the numbers of feral and other problematic non-native animals, particularly those that have a negative effect on the populations of native special-status species.

- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.4-1:** Monitor the presence of feral and other potentially problematic, non-native animals (e.g., domestic cats, black rats, starlings, and cowbirds).
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.4-2:** Where appropriate and feasible, develop a control plan to reduce the numbers of non-native and feral animals that have a negative effect on populations of sensitive species.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.4-3:** Inform Park visitors about the negative effects of releasing and/or feeding animals in the Park. Consider including this information in interpretive and educational programs at the Park.

## Habitat Corridors

Habitat corridors connect areas of habitat that may otherwise be isolated. Such corridors facilitate movement of animals, including dispersal and migration. They may also facilitate dispersal of seeds. The Sacramento River, its tributaries, and their associated habitats, serve as habitat corridors. The river is used as a migratory pathway by a variety of aquatic species, including anadromous fish. Migratory birds are also dependent upon the river, Big Chico Creek, and their riparian and oak woodland habitats.

**Goal ER-1.5:** Preserve and enhance, as appropriate, habitat corridors provided by the Park and between the Park and other areas of similar habitats to maintain or increase their usage by native plant and animal species.

- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.5-1:** Coordinate with adjacent landowners to ensure preservation and enhancement, as appropriate, of existing habitat corridors.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-1.5-2:** Consider establishment of corridors linking existing but isolated parcels through acquisition or easements, as appropriate.

## **PARK-WIDE GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Recorded and unrecorded cultural resources within the Park and in the surrounding areas are an important component of the cultural heritage of the region. These include prehistoric and historic sites, features, and artifacts, and include those linked to the prominent Bidwell family who donated much of the Park's land to the Department for the use and inspiration of the people of California. Preservation and interpretation of cultural resource features would be crucial in understanding early Native American and historic land use patterns in the vicinity of the Sacramento River.

**Overall Goal ER-2:** Protect the cultural resources within the Park, providing interpretive and educational opportunities, where feasible.

### **Archeological (Prehistoric) and Historic Resources**

Because no comprehensive archaeological survey has been conducted, the extent and significance of cultural resources (includes prehistoric and historic resources) in the Park is not fully understood at this time. Approximate locations of some important cultural resources in the general vicinity of the Park are known (e.g., Chico Landing, Bidwell Ferry, Reavis Ferry, and Chico Free Bridge), but because of the dynamic nature of the adjacent river system, many of these resources have not been formally documented or assessed for significance. The locations of other potential cultural features (e.g., Giannelli Bridge, Sea Scout station, Tyler Dance Hall) are more well-defined, but again, they have not been fully documented.

Given the present lack of a comprehensive assessment of prehistoric and historic resource locations within and in the vicinity of the Park, the compilation of a cultural resources data base is critical. As the most important step in the preservation of cultural resources is detailed information on their locations, conditions, and cultural and temporal associations, the development of this data is an integral component to the protection of cultural resources in the Park, and associated interpretive efforts.

**Goal ER-2.1:** Locate and assess the significance of cultural resources within the Park.

- ▶ **Guideline ER-2.1-1:** Develop a Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP) for the Park. As part of the development of a CRMP, a comprehensive survey of the Park is necessary to survey, assess, and record known archaeological and historical resources

within the Park. In addition, the CRMP will provide recommendations for the protection, preservation, and interpretation of significant cultural resources.

- ▶ **Guideline ER-2.1-2:** Perform cultural resource investigations of development sites prior to the construction of facility developments. If significant cultural resources are found, implement protective measures in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-2.1-3:** Investigate the presence of cultural resources on nearby properties in collaboration with other stakeholders, where feasible.

## **PARK-WIDE GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR WATERSHED MANAGEMENT**

The Park's primary natural feature is the Sacramento River system. The various subunits are either located directly along the main river channel or at the confluence of the river and several of its tributaries, including Big Chico Creek and Pine Creek. These waterways are important for navigation, recreation, agricultural and urban water supply, and wildlife habitat. In consideration of these purposes, water quality and river dynamics are major issues in the Park planning process.

**Overall Goal ER-3:** Operate the Park within the context of natural watershed functions, and promote watershed health, wherever possible.

### **River Dynamics and Flooding**

The natural dynamics of intermittent flooding, meander migration, and sediment deposition help to maintain a healthy riparian ecosystem that provides crucial habitat for hundreds of resident and migratory birds, fish and wildlife species. It also provides a rich bed load of fine soil and nutrients in the floodplain that have enabled productive farming along the river.

**Goal ER-3.1:** Allow for the natural meander of the Sacramento River where the river course and the associated flood events would be compatible with public safety, environmental protection considerations, and principles of the Sacramento River Conservation Area Handbook (SRCAF 2002).

- ▶ **Guideline ER-3.1-1:** Monitor river course changes and areas of excessive erosion caused by the river.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-3.1-2:** Minimize locating new facilities and bank stabilization features in areas likely to be within the river channel or sensitive habitats except where such facilities and features are necessary to maintain public safety or protection of sensitive habitat for special-status species.

### **Water Quality**

The stretch of Sacramento River adjacent to the Park is a "water quality limited segment" of the Sacramento River as listed by the RWQCB on its Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List

(RWQCB 2003). Land uses in the Park and the surrounding areas may contribute runoff with pollutants and sediments that can degrade water quality, while the natural vegetation that characterizes the majority of the Park may improve water quality by filtering the water and trapping sediments. Sound planning decisions can help improve water quality, which is crucial in sustaining healthy aquatic habitats and migration corridors, maintaining safe conditions for visitors, and providing agricultural and urban water supplies to the region.

**Goal ER-3.2:** Operate Park facilities and manage resources in a manner that does not contribute to degradation in water quality of the watershed.

- ▶ **Guideline ER-3.2-1:** Implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) during construction, including the development of erosion control plans for projects involving excavation or other ground surface disturbances that would increase the potential for generating sediment-carrying runoff.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-3.2-2:** Establish, maintain, and preserve riparian vegetation buffers along riverbanks wherever feasible.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-3.2-3:** Design, maintain, and monitor use of trails so as to minimize erosion and soil compaction that contributes to erosion.

#### **PARK-WIDE GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR SCENIC RESOURCES**

The aesthetic quality of the Park is based on its proximity to the Sacramento River and associated natural environment. As such, the Park exhibits a riverine landscape that can be appreciated by Park visitors, as well as casual “passers-by” that travel by the Park. In managing for the aesthetic quality of the Park, three key issues must be considered – the physical resources that influence the scenic quality of the Park, public viewpoints that provide access to the views of these scenic resources, and the integration of management proposals, such as facility development, into the existing landscape.

**Overall Goal ER-4:** Preserve, perpetuate, and provide access to the distinctive landscape qualities that reinforce the general character of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park.

#### **Scenic Resource Protection**

The scenic quality of the Sacramento River and the surrounding natural and agricultural environment is a significant attraction of the Park. While views are generally limited within the Park by the flat topography and dense vegetation, some viewpoints from the Park, namely along the river, offer expansive views of the river and its surroundings. Moreover, visitors boating on the river also have uninterrupted views of the river and the adjacent woodland. Preservation of the natural appearance of the river-based viewshed is facilitated by the preponderance of public land ownership along this stretch of the Sacramento River.

**Goal ER-4.1:** Preserve the natural landscape appearance of the Sacramento River corridor and its tributaries.

- ▶ **Guideline ER-4.1-1:** Protect riparian woodland for its aesthetic value, as well as its natural processes and functions.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-4.1-2:** Establish visual screening of existing and proposed facility developments that are visible from the river or shoreline using natural vegetation wherever possible.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-4.1-3:** Consider the natural aesthetics of the Sacramento River when siting and designing signage in support of the Park and its facilities.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-4.1-4:** Shield light sources wherever possible to reduce light pollution that can degrade nighttime views.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-4.1-5:** Support activities that promote debris clean-up in and along the Sacramento River and its tributaries.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-4.1-6:** Review proposed development projects in proximity to the Park and provide input to local jurisdictions and public agencies regarding the visual impacts of developments along the Sacramento River that are visible from the Park.

## Public Viewpoints

Public viewpoints are locations at which clearings in the vegetation give way to expansive views of the waterways in the foreground and the riparian vegetation or the surrounding agricultural uses in the background. Public access to these viewpoints, through trails or roadways, enhances the visitor’s appreciation of the Park and the riparian environment.

**Goal ER-4.2:** Develop public viewpoints serving the Park’s scenic resources, focusing on views of the Sacramento River and its tributaries from different vantage points throughout the Park.

- ▶ **Guideline ER-4.2-1:** Designate public viewpoints within the Park (e.g., along trails) where views of the waterways are unobstructed by existing vegetation or other natural features.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-4.2-2:** Coordinate with federal, state, and local jurisdictions to develop vehicle “pull-out” areas along public roadways serving the Park, where appropriate in consideration of traffic safety and other environmental concerns. Consider integrating interpretive signs or panels with road-side viewpoints as appropriate.

## Design Standards and Guidelines

Facilities and signage with standardized design help to orient visitors to the location and boundaries of the Park. This is particularly important given the multitude of public lands in the vicinity that are owned and managed by various agencies and organizations with varying

operational policies. Design guidelines can also help to ensure visual and environmental compatibility of future development with the established land use pattern and existing natural setting.

**Goal ER-4.3:** Establish a uniform and consistent appearance of facilities and landscapes within the Park that are aesthetically pleasing and compatible with the landscape setting.

- ▶ **Guideline ER-4.3-1:** Develop and implement design standards and guidelines for all permanent Park facilities, such as signs, interpretive panels, trails, day-use areas, campgrounds, etc.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-4.3-2:** Develop and implement design standards and guidelines for landscaping plans that can be implemented in conjunction with facility development.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-4.3-3:** Replace existing (older) signs as needed using updated design standards and guidelines to ensure uniformly designed signs.
- ▶ **Guideline ER-4.3-4:** Support the development of comprehensive design standards and guidelines for the entire upper Sacramento River system that establishes standard signage (i.e., symbology) for facilities and other features along the river.

### 3.2.2 VISITOR USE AND OPPORTUNITIES

Establishing or maintaining public access and high-quality use of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park is one of the primary considerations in developing this Plan and will be used as a gauge in evaluating its ultimate success. The development of visitor use and opportunities parallels the efforts for resource protection, as both are management directives of the State Parks system. Opportunities to integrate visitor use and resource protection are particularly beneficial from a public and land stewardship perspective. Three main aspects of planning for visitor use and opportunities are considered in this Plan: (1) recreation, (2) interpretation and education, and (3) circulation and access

#### PARK-WIDE GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR RECREATION

The Park is an important recreational resource for the greater Chico area and the surrounding region, as it is the primary point of access to the Sacramento River for the local residents of Butte and Glenn counties. Furthermore, of the various state and federal agencies owning land in the region, the Department is the only one with a mission to provide recreational opportunities.

The Park supports a large variety of recreational activities for different visitor types, and at times it accommodates a large number of visitors. A variety of facilities and programs are needed to fully accommodate the multitude of recreational needs of existing and future visitors. These facilities and programs must be compatible with the resource values of the Park if it is to remain a popular recreational attraction for the region.

**Overall Goal VU-1:** Provide recreational opportunities associated with the unique resources of the Sacramento River and its riparian and Oak Woodland environments.

### **River Access**

The primary recreational attraction of the Park is the access it provides to the Sacramento River. Popular activities in the river include boating, fishing, tubing, kayaking, swimming, and wading. The Park features two boat ramps for both motorized and non-motorized (cartop) boat launching, as well as a number of undeveloped areas, such as gravel bars, that provide additional launching opportunities for non-motorized boats. The continuing growth in the demand for recreational boating opportunities and law enforcement needs on the river, intensified by the relative shortage of functional boat ramps in the area, may be accommodated by new or expanded facilities at the Park. Coordination between the agencies that operate boat launch facilities is an important key to providing sufficient and appropriate boating access in the region.

**Goal VU-1.1:** Expand boat launching opportunities serving motorized and non-motorized boating activity based on availability of appropriate sites.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.1-1:** Evaluate improvements to the existing boat launch areas (i.e., Irvine Finch and Pine Creek Landing) to accommodate larger vehicles and vessels, and repair deficiencies in existing ramps.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.1-2:** Provide expanded parking capacity, including boat trailer parking, at existing boat launch areas, based on local and regional demand and the availability of land.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.1-3:** Consider the development of a non-motorized (cartop) boat launch facility at appropriate locations at the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.1-4:** Collaborate with other public agencies and organizations in identifying appropriate locations for motorized boat launch facilities in the region. Support the development of additional motorized boat facilities in the region (outside Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park) as demand warrants.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.1-5:** Explore cost-sharing opportunities for maintaining existing and developing new boat launch facilities with other public agencies, namely the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Boating and Waterways.

**Goal VU-1.2:** Accommodate recreational access to the Sacramento River, while promoting the safety of Park visitors.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.2-1:** As appropriate, provide information regarding safe water-based recreation at appropriate river access points throughout the Park.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.2-2:** Control access to the river, as necessary, during peak-period recreation periods in coordination with other public land managers and law enforcement agencies.

## Day-Use Areas

While day-use areas are used as staging for hiking, birding, and other recreational activities, the most traditional use of day-use areas is picnicking, an activity that may be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities. Picnicking is one of the most popular recreation activities in the region, with demand increasing as population in the area grows. Facilities for picnicking can vary widely from simple benches located where one can enjoy the scenery, to individual picnic tables located in the shade of trees, to large covered structures with many tables and benches for larger groups. Amenities that may be considered for day-use areas include shade ramadas, barbecues, drinking fountains, restrooms, and trash receptacles. The demand for the different types of picnic facilities and other amenities vary by user group, with the large, growing and diverse population in the project area tending to favor large picnic facilities with sufficient parking that can accommodate large family and group events.

**Goal VU-1.3:** Develop additional day-use facilities near recreational or aesthetic amenities based on availability of appropriate sites.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.3-1:** Develop new day-use areas at appropriate locations throughout the Park, based on local and regional demand and in consideration of environmental constraints.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.3-2:** Maintain or expand existing day-use areas throughout the Park as demand warrants. Assess opportunities for linkage of existing and proposed day-use areas and other facilities proposed as part of this Plan where appropriate.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.3-3:** Design new and expanded day-use facilities to accommodate a range of user groups, including en-route visitors, families, and small and large groups to the extent feasible depending on the characteristics of the site. Consider the integration of at least one reservable group day-use area catering to special events into proposals for new or expanded day-use facilities.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.3-4:** Provide appropriate amenities at new or expanded day-use facilities that may include entrance kiosks for controlled entry, shade ramadas, flush restroom facilities, potable water, and trailhead access to Park and regional trail systems where available.

## Camping

Overnight camping facilities are in high demand in the region. There are no developed campgrounds from the Park south to Colusa, a stretch of approximately 50 river miles. Opportunities for environmental boat-in camping are generally more available, but are limited to gravel bars below the ordinary high-water mark on the river. Both developed and

environmental (or primitive) camping opportunities have been identified by Park users as a desired feature of future Park development, with greater emphasis and need for developed campgrounds relative to environmental campsites.

**Goal VU-1.4:** Develop a range of overnight camping opportunities in the Park based on availability of appropriate sites.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.4-1:** Consider the development of a walk-in or boat-in environmental campground at an appropriate location within the Park, incorporating features of habitat restoration, where feasible.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.4-2:** Consider the development of a developed overnight campground at an appropriate location within the Park, which could include both family and group campsites. Incorporate provisions to address flood events (e.g., raise restrooms, concrete tables/pads) if the site is located within the designated floodplain.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.4-3:** Explore cost-sharing opportunities for the development of campground facilities with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as part of their Hamilton City flood control project.

## Fishing Access

The Park is recognized for the high-quality fishing opportunities it provides. Bank fishing occurs at a number of locations throughout the Park, and boat fishing is accommodated through the Park's boat launch facilities. As fish spawning and rearing habitat is improved in the Sacramento River watershed, fish populations can be expected to increase, creating more opportunities for fishing. For visitors without boat access, sufficient fishing access along the riverbank is crucial in encouraging and enhancing fishing activity.

**Goal VU-1.5:** Expand and improve fishing access along the Sacramento River and its tributaries, including access for riverbank fishing.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.5-1:** Improve existing roads throughout the Park that provide access to established bank fishing opportunities, where feasible, to allow for additional parking opportunities and improved circulation.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.5-2:** Work with local jurisdictions to identify, sign, and improve locations that provide access to established bank fishing locations at the Park, where appropriate, based on public safety and environmental constraints.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.5-3:** Consider opportunities to develop additional parking areas on Park property that could facilitate access to established bank fishing locations along the Sacramento River and its tributaries.

## Wildlife Observation

Public interest in wildlife observation, including bird watching and photography, is expected to increase substantially in the future as bird and wildlife populations increase in response to habitat improvements on established and recently acquired conservation lands in the surrounding area. Wildlife observation, especially bird watching, typically occurs on trails located in the Park. Hunting on adjacent lands and the use of motorized boats and jet skis limit bird watching and wildlife viewing because of public safety concerns and noise impacts that interfere with hearing bird calls or cause wildlife to move away.

**Goal VU-1.6:** Provide high quality wildlife observation opportunities throughout the Park.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.6-1:** Locate and design trails to provide access to high-quality wildlife-viewing areas within the Park where feasible.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.6-2:** Facilitate high-quality wildlife viewing opportunities through the use of appurtenances, such as bird boxes, that attract wildlife to the Park without encouraging unnatural wildlife behavior.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.6-3:** Provide amenities, such as interpretive displays and published bird lists, at day-use areas and along trails that enhance wildlife viewing opportunities.

## Concessions

There are currently no concession services at the Park, although seasonal concessions have been used at the Park in the past. Looking to the future, the use of concession services may be considered appropriate when evaluated in the context of proposed recreational development proposed in this plan. Concession services could improve recreational opportunities at the Park by providing supplies and services that facilitate a high-quality recreational experience.

**Overall Goal VU-1.7:** Incorporate concession services serving recreational facilities at the Park.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-1.7-1:** Explore opportunities for temporary and permanent concession services as part of facility development proposals.
- ▶ **Guidelines VU-1.7-2:** Consider the provision of temporary concession services during peak recreation periods and special events.

## PARK-WIDE GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

Interpretation of the Park's natural and cultural resources can increase visitor appreciation of the diverse history of the region, including Native American practices and the rich agricultural influence of early settlers, and may promote public support for preserving, protecting, and restoring sensitive resources. Moreover, providing opportunities for public education can promote public safety, facilitate understanding of the riparian ecosystem and agricultural uses

of the area, and enhance the overall recreational experience for Park visitors. A successful interpretive and educational program can increase operational efficiency of the Park and foster a culture of ecologically sound Park stewardship for future generations.

An Interpretive Prospectus (1997) has been developed for the Park (please refer to Appendix E). It provides guidance for immediate interpretive development at the Park, but is flexible to allow modifications as part of future planning actions, including the development of a General Plan for the Park.

**Overall Goal VU-2:** Provide educational and interpretive opportunities associated with the unique natural and cultural resources of the Sacramento River and its riparian and Oak Woodland environments.

### **Interpretive Themes and Periods**

The Interpretive Prospectus includes a set of interpretive themes for the Park (see Appendix D). It includes one unifying theme and a set of primary and secondary themes for each Park area, which define the use and meaning of that area and reflect its contribution to the whole Park. The unifying theme for the Park is:

*The Riparian/Riverine Habitat is Dynamic and Critically Important to the Health of the Sacramento River and All Life Associated with It.*

In addition, a set of interpretive periods have been developed for the Park, which dictate the time period within which interpretive efforts are focused. The primary interpretive period for the Park is the Present, and secondary periods include *Prehistoric Origins, Human Prehistory, Early History and General & Annie Bidwell, and Annie's Gift Up to the Present*.

**Goal VU-2.1:** Communicate a consistent set of meaningful and interesting interpretive and educational messages to the public via interpretive programs at the Park.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-2.1-1:** Implement the Interpretive Prospectus (1997) adopted for the Park. All new interpretative/educational programs and facilities should conform to the primary and secondary interpretive themes and periods in the prospectus.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-2.1-2:** Review and update the Interpretive Prospectus as appropriate to reflect current understanding of the natural and cultural resources and emerging use patterns at the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-2.1-3:** Update the Interpretive Prospectus when new properties are added to the Park to reflect new interpretive opportunities associated with these new properties.

## Events and Programs

Active public outreach events and programs, such as school group tours, community events, one-day classes, and educational camps, are an opportunity to provide in-depth education opportunities tailored for special groups, families, tourists, and other people with specialized interest or needs, as well as the community as a whole. Because the educational and community programs allow Park staff to engage the public in an interactive format, the relationship between the Park and the community can be enhanced.

**Goal VU-2.2:** Provide educational and recreational public outreach events and programs to various community groups.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-2.2-1:** Develop curriculum-based study guides for school outreach.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-2.2-2:** Operate staff/volunteer-guided tours for community groups.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-2.2-3:** Collaborate with community groups to identify opportunities to provide new educational programs that are consistent with the themes in the Interpretive Prospectus.

## Interpretive Signage and Kiosks

Interpretive panels, kiosks, and other permanent displays can serve as a low-impact and low-maintenance method to transmit interpretive and educational messages to Park visitors if they are planned in consideration of the natural aesthetics of the Park. They can be used in conjunction with other informational signage that informs visitors regarding Park rules and guidance on public safety. While interpretive panels and kiosks allow only limited interactive opportunities with visitors, the permanent displays are an efficient way of conveying information to Park visitors.

**Goal VU-2.3:** Disseminate interpretive and educational information to Park visitors and the local community via non-staffed facilities.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-2.3-1:** Install interpretive signage, kiosks, and map displays throughout the Park and in the surrounding communities, focusing primarily on areas along existing and proposed trail systems, parking areas, and public viewpoints.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-2.3-2:** Develop interpretive facilities and school outreach programs that provide connections between the Bidwell Mansion State Historic Park and the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-2.3-3:** Consider the natural aesthetics of the Park when siting and designing interpretive facilities, such as signs, panels, and kiosks.

## Visitor Center

A visitor center can serve as a centralized location for a multitude of visitor and other services, including the dissemination of information regarding Park facilities and services, special events, recreational opportunities and restrictions, interpretive and educational opportunities, the mission of the Park, resource values and sensitivities, and basic contact and emergency reporting information. It can also potentially support features, such as theme-based exhibits and a cooperative gift-shop facility, which accentuate the overall purpose of the Park. The Park's close proximity to other state and federal public lands presents an opportunity for collaboration to develop a regional visitor center at an optimum location that can serve multiple public planning and outreach efforts.

**Goal VU-2.4:** Evaluate opportunities to develop a visitor center to provide multiple visitor services at an easily accessible location that serves local and regional residents.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-2.4-1:** Consider the development of a new visitor center that would serve the Park and potentially other public lands in the region. The size and amenities at the visitor center would be dependent on potential for multi-agency teaming opportunities.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-2.4-2:** Provide for a multitude of visitor services at the visitor center in an effort to provide a consolidated recreational and interpretive/educational experience.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-2.4-3:** Consider opportunities to integrate scientific research center in conjunction with the proposed visitor center.

## PARK-WIDE GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR CIRCULATION AND ACCESS

Parks that provide facilities for multiple modes of transportation increase accessibility for different user groups. Circulation facilities should be designed for safety (e.g., turning lanes, no sharp turns, sufficient width), convenience (e.g., parking, directional signage), and connectivity (e.g., connection between Park areas, points of interest, and the roadway system). Because of the discontinuous nature of the Park subunits, regional cooperation would be crucial in developing a well-designed and user-friendly circulation network.

**Overall Goal VU-3:** Provide safe, convenient, and well-connected facilities for multiple modes of transportation within and between the Park's subunits.

## Visitor Access

Visitor access to the Park is an important consideration in future Park planning efforts. Visitors typically access the Park via River Road on the east side of the river and via SR 32 on the west side of the river. Because access to the Park is restricted to these two public roadways, it is imperative that the alignment, physical condition, and traffic along these roadways are conducive to the visitor access. In addition, there is no single entrance point to the Park and

entrance signs at the various subunits, where present, are not prominent, resulting in low recognition of Park facilities.

Public transportation, including alternative transportation methods, can facilitate visitation by students or others who cannot or choose not to drive to the Park. Currently, Glenn County provides bus service on SR 32 between Hamilton City and Chico; however, this bus route does not stop at the Park. Bus service that would connect the Park and the communities of Chico and Hamilton City, particularly on weekends or special occasions, has the opportunity to substantially increase accessibility to the Park; however, feasibility of providing bus service would depend on the expected level of existing and future use.

Roadway safety is another consideration in Park access. Because the Park is located along two major roadways in a rural area, vehicular traffic often travels at excessive speeds. Intersections with driveways, trail crossings, and other roadways should be designed to avoid collisions and other accidents involving vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

**Goal VU-3.1:** Provide for safe and readily available access to the Park from the local roadway system serving the Park.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.1-1:** Work with local jurisdictions to install directional signage along major roadways that direct Park visitors to the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.1-2:** Install Park entrance signs at all subunit entrance points consistent with design standards and guidelines developed for the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.1-3:** Coordinate with local jurisdictions and Caltrans to maintain and, where necessary, improve roadway conditions serving the Park, including providing review for development projects that could affect visitor access to the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.1-4:** Work with Butte County in exploring opportunities for the realignment of River Road near the Big Chico Creek Riparian Area complex to facilitate visitor access.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.1-5:** Conduct traffic analyses for all major facility development projects when required. Comply with applicable circulation design standards and guidelines for all proposed facility developments that may affect the public roadway system.

**Goal VU-3.2:** Encourage the use of public transportation to the Park.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.2-1:** Coordinate with Butte and Glenn counties to establish seasonal bus service to the Park, and consider permanent service as demand warrants.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.2-2:** Provide auxiliary facilities in support of public transportation, such as public bus stops and turn-around space.

## Parking

Availability of parking is a constraint on the number of people that can visit the Park by automobiles and buses. Because the Park is not within short walking distance from nearby communities (it is located approximately 6 miles from the City of Chico) and visitors commonly drive to the Park, there is the need to provide sufficient parking capacity at each major point of interest, particularly at boat launch areas, throughout the Park.

**Goal VU-3.3:** Provide car and bus parking spaces for points of interest where environmentally compatible and as space allows.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.3-1:** Accommodate bus access to the Park, where feasible, via bus parking and turnaround areas. Such facilities would serve organized groups utilizing the interpretive and educational resources at the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.3-2:** Incorporate sufficient parking capacity, serving a range of vehicle types, into proposed facility development plans.

## Internal Circulation and Access

Once visitors arrive at the Park, it is equally important to facilitate efficient circulation within and between Park subunits. The predominant mode of internal circulation at the Park is and will continue to be the Park's trail system, as there are no major vehicular roadways that promote internal circulation. Trails can serve a wide range of non-motorized activities. They provide footpaths to fishing access areas that are located away from major roadways, access to high-quality wildlife observation and sight-seeing opportunities, and can accommodate multiple modes of transportation, including walking/hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and even water-based transportation such as kayaks and canoes. As trail development in the region progresses and as populations grow, it is anticipated that the Park will experience an increased demand for multi-use trail systems, particularly along the river corridor. Issues that must be considered in the development of a sound internal circulation plan include the types of trail systems proposed, impacts to vegetation and wildlife, and the need for directional signage and maps as appropriate. By informing visitors of their location and adjacent land ownership patterns, directional signage and maps can orient Park visitors and assist them to avoid trespassing on private lands.

Another consideration in promoting internal circulation throughout the Park and access to recreational opportunities is Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility. Visitors with disabilities may be precluded from gaining access to and/or participating in certain recreational activities. There needs to be a concerted effort to promote the accessibility of Park facilities to people with varying abilities. As technologies and legal requirements established by the ADA evolve, the approach to ADA accessibility within the Park will also change.

**Goal VU-3.4:** Provide for an interconnecting trail network within the Park where feasible and consider linkages to regional trail systems where appropriate.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.4-1:** Consider the development of new and expanded internal loop trails and associated trailheads at appropriate subunits of the Park in an effort to link Park properties.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.4-2:** Coordinate with state and federal agencies to develop a regional loop trail system that would connect the Park with other nearby public land holdings.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.4-3:** Incorporate provisions for safe road crossings, where applicable, in the development of proposed trail systems.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.4-4:** Evaluate the suitability of existing and proposed trail systems for multiple uses in consideration of public safety and environmental factors.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.4-5:** Provide amenities, such as drinking fountains, restroom facilities, and interpretive panels, along trails where appropriate.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.4-6:** Coordinate with local jurisdictions and organizations to incorporate connections between bicycle trails within the Park and the regional bicycle trails system.

**Goal VU-3.5:** Connect and integrate the Park’s subunits through the establishment of a canoe trail along the Sacramento River system.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.5-1:** Coordinate with federal and state agencies and local jurisdictions to develop a local canoe trail that would connect the existing and proposed boat launch areas throughout the Park, as well as providing access to other nearby public lands as appropriate.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.5-2:** Support the development of a comprehensive Sacramento River canoe trail that would be integrated with the proposed canoe trail at the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.5-3:** Provide informational and interpretive signage along the Park canoe trail, while preserving the aesthetic qualities of the river corridor. Public information may include safety guidelines, rules of use, and location and alignment of canoe trail. Interpretive information may focus on interpretation of the waterway and associated resources. Coordinate with local private and public property owners in determining the appropriate placement of signage and developed facilities (e.g., camping areas) as appropriate.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.5-4:** Explore opportunities for integration of seasonal boating and equipment concessionaire that would serve canoe trail users.

**Goal VU-3.6:** Provide access to recreational opportunities to all people regardless of physical limitations.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.6-1:** Comply with existing and future requirements for ADA accessibility.

**Goal VU-3.7:** Develop a system of signage that directs, orients, and educates visitors within the Park.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.7-1:** Install Park maps selectively throughout the Park, including “you are here” identifiers, as appropriate.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.7-2:** Clearly delineate Park boundaries through the use of coordinated informational signage or other techniques.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.7-3:** Encourage delineation of adjacent public land boundaries.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.7-4:** Integrate information regarding Park rules and public safety, including the risk of wildfire, into directional and informational signage.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.7-5:** Install river view/access signs that direct visitors to appropriate locations along the river for safe access and high-quality views along the Sacramento River, implementing uniform design standards as they are developed for the Sacramento River corridor.

**Goal VU-3.8:** Provide for the safety of Park visitors while circulating within the Park.

- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.8-1:** Separate vehicle traffic from pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians wherever feasible.
- ▶ **Guideline VU-3.8-2:** Install signage that encourages safe driving practices for vehicles entering the Park that are compatible with pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians use (e.g., speed limits, “share the road,” pedestrians ahead).

### 3.2.3 ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

The administration and operation of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park is an important component of overall Park management. Not only does it affect internal Park resources, such as staffing and funding, it indirectly affects the visitor experience by influencing the environment within which people are recreating or otherwise using the Park.

As used here, the term “administration and operation” refers to a broad category of management actions that are, for the most part, separate from direct management of the Park’s natural resources or recreational facilities at the Park; instead, administration and operation reflects day-to-day operation of the Park as a whole, which is often linked to management approaches for integrating operations of the Park within the larger physical and planning environment within which the Park functions. While this section proposes broad guidance on the administration and operation of the Park, it is not intended to constitute a formal Operations Plan for the Park.

For the purposes of this plan, administration and operation of the Park can be organized into four components: (1) Park boundaries, (2) day-to-day operations, (3) facility development, and (4) local and regional coordination.

## **PARK-WIDE GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR PARK BOUNDARIES**

As it exists today, the current extent of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park is relatively small for a State Park unit, totaling just over 200 acres in size. In addition, the Park is a conglomeration of several discrete properties that function separately in providing recreational opportunities to the public and enhancing resource values in the Park. Although the approximate location of these properties (or subunits) is known, there exists some degree of uncertainty regarding their precise boundaries. Because of the fragmented nature of the Park's subunits, which is not visitor-friendly and can result in operational inefficiency, there is the desire to expand the Park, where feasible, to promote connectivity between the Park's subunits, as well as with other public land in the region, and to establish logical Park boundaries based on existing geographic features.

**Overall Goal AO-1:** Establishment of well-defined Park boundaries that can serve as base for future expansion in accordance with the vision and goals for the Park.

### **Delineation of Existing Park Boundaries**

The delineation of existing Park boundaries is an important first step in planning for the future of the Park. Park boundary issues are prevalent mainly on the east side of the Sacramento River in Butte County. Discrepancies have arisen because of the lack of surveyed boundary information, and have been further compounded by the meandering nature of the river.

**Goal AO-1.1:** Attain a clear understanding of existing Park boundaries.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-1.1-1:** Work with Butte and Glenn counties to survey existing Park boundaries. Areas of concern include: (1) Big Chico Creek bridge overpass, (2) north end of Big Chico Creek Riparian Area along west side of River Road, (3) south end of Indian Fishery property near Old Chico Landing, and (4) Pine Creek Landing subunit.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-1.1-2:** Clearly delineate Park boundaries through the use of fencing or signage so staff and visitors understand the extent of State Park land.

### **Future Property Additions**

Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park has the potential to grow over time through property additions. By increasing the size and diversifying the characteristics of the Park, land acquisitions can provide added recreational opportunities and natural and cultural resources to the Park for visitors' enjoyment as well as for the preservation and management of these resources.

**Goal AO-1.2:** Expand the Park to promote consolidated management of natural resources and recreational opportunities.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-1.2-1:** Acquire properties from willing-sellers as opportunities arise in order to achieve Park-wide goals.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-1.2-2:** Explore opportunities for funding of property acquisitions, including grant and bond funding sources.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-1.2-3:** Explore opportunities for land exchanges and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with other public agencies that could improve operational efficiency at the Park.

### **PARK-WIDE GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR ONGOING OPERATION OF THE PARK**

The proposed General Plan entails major changes for Park resources and facilities. As a result, there is the need to reconsider existing Park operations at both the planning and ground level. This component of the plan characterizes broad-level goals and guidelines for day-to-day operations of the Park and its relationship to the visitor experience and management of important natural resources. It does not address specific changes to staffing and organization, which will be adjusted as necessary for successful implementation of the Plan.

**Overall Goal AO-2:** Manage, maintain, and operate Park facilities to meet visitor needs.

#### **Administrative Center**

The location of the existing Park administrative center at the Indian Fishery is not well-suited for such a facility. The administrative center has been repeatedly subject to flood events, thus requiring an elevated modular office. There is also a lack of storage space for maintenance and other equipment, which must be re-located offsite to avoid damage during flood events. Lastly, the existing facility is located on the east side of the river, and therefore, does not represent a centralized location relative to the properties and facilities considered in this Plan.

**Goal AO-2.1:** Establish a centralized location for administrative facilities that promotes efficient management of the Park's resources.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-2.1-1:** Relocate the existing administrative center at Indian Fishery to a more appropriate location that meets the needs of the Park, as well as other State Park units in the Valley Sector, allowing for centralized operations and equipment storage. The siting of such a facility will consider the elevation of seasonal flood events to minimize potential property damage and opportunities for multi-agency use.

## Park Maintenance

Maintenance of Park facilities has the potential to affect the visitor experience. Benefits of properly and regularly maintained facilities include, but are not limited to, an improved aesthetic character of the Park and increased utilization of recreational facilities.

**Goal AO-2.2:** Maintain Park facilities to meet visitor needs.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-2.2-1:** Establish standardized procedures for Park maintenance that addresses issues including, but not limited to, routine waste disposal and recycling, removal of silt and debris from developed facilities after flood events, and regular trail maintenance and clearing.

## Emergency Services and Visitor Safety

Because of the nature of existing and proposed recreational opportunities and location along the Sacramento River, there exists the potential for emergency service needs for Park visitors.

**Goal AO-2.3:** Provide a safe environment for visitors to the Park.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-2.3-1:** Coordinate with local law enforcement agencies and emergency response providers in promoting the safety of Park visitors.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-2.3-2:** Work cooperatively with local jurisdictions and public agencies in providing a safe environment for Park visitors during special events, including safe access to and from the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-2.3-3:** Accommodate access for emergency vehicles where appropriate throughout the Park, including emergency access during peak recreation periods and events.

## PARK-WIDE GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

Adequate facilities, such as administrative office space, recreational amenities, trails, and roads, are critical for efficient management of the Park. Planning for the development of such facilities within the Park involves consideration of natural and physical factors. The Park is subject to a fluctuating natural environment, namely the dynamic nature of the Sacramento River, which must be considered in facility planning. In addition, the majority of the Park is located within the designated floodplain, which places additional constraints on development. Physical factors, including public infrastructure, which vary throughout the Park, also are an important consideration in facility planning.

**Overall Goal AO-3:** Develop facilities within the parameters of the Park's natural and physical environment, and in consideration of the safety of Park visitors.

## Facility Siting and Design

One unique feature of the Park is that it operates within a dynamic river system that subjects Park facilities to natural river events, including meandering and flooding. These phenomena must be considered when planning for and designing new facilities, especially because the purpose and vision of the Park highlight the natural river system, one of the key features of the Park.

**Goal AO-3.1:** Site and design appropriate Park facilities to embrace natural river processes.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-3.1-1:** Allow appropriate facility development within the 100-year floodplain and designated Inner River Zone, incorporating site and facility design features to minimize potential damage from flood events, to the extent feasible.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-3.1-2:** Re-design existing facilities within the 100-year floodplain that are subject to repeated flooding to withstand flood events.

## Utilities and Infrastructure

Sound facility planning must also consider the existing infrastructure serving the Park. Currently, Park properties on the east side of the river, except for portions of Indian Fishery, are not served by public water or wastewater disposal systems. These systems represent the opportunities for drinking water and flush restroom facilities, which are an important component of many of the recreational amenities proposed for the Park in this Plan.

**Goal AO-3.2:** Develop facilities that are supported by established infrastructure systems.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-3.2-1:** Connect new facilities to existing potable water and wastewater disposal systems wherever possible.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-3.2-2:** Coordinate with local jurisdictions to extend utilities and other infrastructure to the Park where it does not exist when determined necessary.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-3.2-3:** Where new utility infrastructure or facilities associated with public services are needed to serve the Park, implement measures that would minimize adverse impacts to the environmental quality at the Park to the extent feasible.

## Air Quality and Noise Considerations in Facility Planning

In planning for the development of facilities at the Park, the Department needs to consider potential effects on the environment, including adverse impacts on local and regional air quality and the noise environment at the Park. Potential impacts related to air quality and noise are most prevalent during the construction phase of new developments, but can also be attributed to common recreation uses.

**Goal AO-3.3:** Develop facilities that do not conflict with ambient air quality and noise standards.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-3.3-1:** Consult with applicable air pollution control districts (APCDs) and/or air quality management districts (AQMDs) prior to any major facility development projects at the Park, and implement all rules and regulations as required by these agencies.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-3.3-2:** Establish appropriate campfire restrictions, through coordination with the local APCD/AQMD, to promote air quality in the region, in conjunction with the development of an overnight campground at the Park.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-3.3-3:** Ensure new facility development and site improvement projects, including associated construction activities and vehicular traffic, conform with applicable noise standards.

### Visitor Safety

Another consideration during facility planning is visitor safety. It is important that adequate levels of staff and necessary services are planned for when considering the development of new facilities and/or property acquisitions. Such resources are integral in providing a safe environment for park visitors.

**Goal AO-3.4:** Ensure the safety of Park visitors during the planning and development of new Park facilities.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-3.4-1:** When planning new facility development or property acquisitions, include consideration of the needs for public safety personnel, equipment, and communication systems.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-3.4-2:** When reviewing potential new facility development or property acquisitions, assess the ability to provide for adequate public safety as part of the environmental review.

### Sustainability

A widely used definition of sustainable development is a “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Sustainability is integrated as a basic tenet of this Preliminary General Plan, as illustrated in the management guidelines and recommendations for facility locations based on a natural and cultural resource–based opportunity and constraints analysis. This Preliminary General Plan also encourages adaptive management techniques to monitor and adjust approaches to resource and visitor management with long-term benefits for each. Sustainable design practices can also be incorporated into future area-specific projects during the planning and design phases. The benefits of sustainable design concepts and practices include:

- ▶ Increasing environmental benefits (conservation of natural resources and reduced waste)

- ▶ Reducing operating costs through less energy consumption
- ▶ Promoting better health for park visitors (for example, through use of fewer toxic and low-emitting materials and interior climate control)
- ▶ Increasing operations and maintenance efficiency (more durable products, less maintenance of toxic substances, lower maintenance costs from resource and energy conservation)
- ▶ Using adaptive management techniques to monitor and adjust approaches to resource and visitor management for long-term benefits to each

**Goal AO-3.5:** Incorporate principles and practices of sustainability into the Park’s design, improvements, and maintenance and operations, and utilize adaptive management principles, to the extent feasible.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-3.5-1:** To the extent feasible, consider sustainable practices in site design, construction, maintenance, and operations. Sustainable principles used in design and management emphasize environmental sensitivity in construction, the use of non-toxic materials and renewable resources, resource conservation, recycling, and energy efficiency.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-3.5-2:** Programs such as LEEDs (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)<sup>1</sup> should be consulted for development of facilities and site-related construction.

#### **PARK-WIDE GOALS AND GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL COORDINATION**

Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park represents one component of an extensive network of public lands in the region. Locally, these public lands are located in close proximity to the greater Chico area located east of the Park. In addition, there are private land holdings located throughout the immediate vicinity of the Park. Based on the extent of local private and public landowners and the Park’s unique location to a growing urban area, it is critical that this Plan provides for goals and guidelines pertaining to local and regional coordination efforts.

**Overall Goal AO-4:** Cooperate with local landowners, communities, and public agencies to foster coordinated management of public lands along the Sacramento River.

#### **Community Involvement**

Based on its proximity to the greater Chico area, which represents a large visitor and volunteer base, the Park appears to be under-used from a community involvement

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<sup>1</sup> LEEDs is a program of the U.S. Green Building Coalition.

perspective. There is an active local community that can serve as an important resource in both Park planning and program implementation. Fostering the relationship between the Park and the community can promote use of the Park so that more people can experience its unique natural and recreational resources and can result in improved land stewardship.

**Goal AO-4.1:** Allow local communities the opportunity to provide input into Park planning and environmental review processes.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.1-1:** Consider soliciting public input on important Park management issues.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.1-2:** Consider the use of visitor survey programs to solicit suggestions on techniques to improve management of the Park.

**Goal AO-4.2:** Provide opportunities for volunteers to participate in Park-wide programs.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.2-1:** Consider developing a Volunteer-in-Parks program for interpretive program involvement and support.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.2-2:** Consider establishing regularly scheduled Park clean-up days where the public can participate, especially after peak-period special events.

**Goal AO-4.3:** Improve the recognition of Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park in the local and regional community.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.3-1:** Develop a public outreach program that focuses on dissemination of information regarding the Park, including maps and special events.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.3-2:** Improve the signage at Park entrances.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.3-3:** Represent the Park by participating in local community events.

### **Coordination with Private Landowners**

There are substantial private land holdings interspersed with the network of public lands in the vicinity of the Park. The resulting mixed land ownership pattern between private and public interests often leads to compatibility and access issues that affect local landowners and Park visitors.

**Goal AO-4.4:** Work with private landowners in proximity to the Park to minimize conflicts associated with the mixed public and private land ownership pattern in the area.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.4-1:** Delineate boundaries between public and private land interfaces using techniques such as fencing or signage.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.4-2:** Review future facility development proposals in the context of land uses on adjacent private property such that potential land use incompatibilities may be minimized through design features (e.g., buffers) or other means.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.4-3:** Implement habitat management and resource enhancement programs in a manner that takes into consideration adjacent land uses, such as agriculture.

### **Coordination with Public and Public-interest Landowners**

The network of public lands in the vicinity of the Park includes properties that are part of the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS) and the Sacramento River Wildlife Area (CDFG). In addition, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) owns substantial land holdings in the project area, as do other non-profit groups, such as River Partners. Based on location and often-related management objectives, it is critical that the proposed plan work in concert with the planning processes currently being undertaken by these other agencies and non-profit groups. A regional approach to resource protection and recreation opportunities will result in efficient management of all public lands in the area.

**Goal AO-4.5:** Establish a multi-agency approach to regional public lands management where practical and feasible.

- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.5-1:** Support the concept of a multi-organization task-force consisting of representatives from USFWS, CDFG, and interested non-profit groups to address local planning and resource management issues.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.5-2:** Coordinate with public land managers in planning for recreational developments throughout the Park, including exploring opportunities for cost-sharing agreements.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.5-3:** Integrate habitat management and resource protection efforts with other public agencies to maximize resource values throughout the Sacramento River corridor.
- ▶ **Guideline AO-4.5-4:** Evaluate existing MOU between the Department, CDFG, and USFWS, and consider revisions, as necessary, to meet Park-wide goals.

### **3.3 AREA-SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

The previous sections of this General Plan focus on goals and guidelines specific to issues or topics common to the management of state Parks. Although that approach is useful in understanding the desired management approach for particular issues, it does not provide the spatial dimension to Park planning that is also a valuable tool for successful Park management. In other words, it is important to understand what type of management approaches and facilities are being considered for different areas of a Park unit. This section

describes potential area-specific management and facility prescriptions for the various subunits that comprise Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park.

### **3.3.1 OVERVIEW OF MANAGEMENT AREA ZONING**

One tool that has been used to address area-specific management in other State Parks is management area zoning. The concept of management zones has been commonly used as a guide for systemizing land use and resource management in areas of a Park unit that have common characteristics and would be managed similarly. This tool is especially applicable to large parks that have a range of resources and/or other physical characteristics that vary across the park.

The concept of management zoning was considered for implementation in this General Plan; however, there was consensus that because Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park is relatively small in size, and for the most part, homogenous in terms of resources and recreational uses, the Park would not be conducive to the use of management zones. Instead, the planning process uses area concept planning that focuses on facility-specific development at different subunits of the Park as described below.

### **3.3.2 AREA CONCEPT PLANNING**

Because this General Plan focuses on facility-specific planning for different subunits of the Park, it was critical to understand the need for and most appropriate placement of various types of recreational facilities and uses within the Park. The need for facilities within the Park was based on current levels of recreational uses, capacity of existing facilities, and recreational and demographic trends (see Chapter 2, Existing Conditions). The conceptual siting of facilities being considered for development within the Park was based on a range of factors including location of existing recreational uses, resource constraints, administrative and operational constraints, site access, etc. In considering the needs of the Park, existing facilities, and future trends, a proposed land use and facility plan has been developed as part of this General Plan (see Exhibit 3-1). The land use and facility plan shows the potential location of proposed facilities at the Park in terms of which facilities are being considered for each subunit of the Park; however, it is not intended to represent site-specific facility planning in terms of actual siting and design of facilities. In other words, the land use and facility plan will only serve as a guide for the development of proposed facilities, which will require site-specific review at the time a particular project is proposed. By virtue of the fact that the facility map locates certain facilities throughout the Park, and therefore indirectly prescribes allowable recreational uses on particular subunits, it does set the foundation for the area-specific vision and management approach at each of the subunits considered in this plan. With this foundation, the Department can implement the issue-specific management goals and guidelines presented in Section 3.2 to the most appropriate locations to ensure consistency between facilities, land uses, and resource management.

It should be noted again that the proposed land use and facility plan includes properties that are not currently under the jurisdiction of the Department. These properties have been

included in the planning process based on their anticipated addition to the Park. If any of these properties are not added to the Park, the establishment of land uses and/or the development of facilities proposed on these properties may be developed on other existing subunits or future property additions that are considered appropriate based on the site-selection criteria described in Section 3.3.3.

Below is a description of the vision for each subunit of the Park, in terms of potential facilities and management approaches.

### **IRVINE FINCH RECREATION AREA**

The Irvine Finch Recreation Area refers to the existing Irvine Finch River Access subunit and the potential addition of the Beard property located just south of Irvine Finch. The addition of the Beard property could allow for the expansion of the popular Irvine Finch facility into an integrated day- and overnight-use facility. This area is envisioned as the primary point of river access at the Park that could be served by improved day-use and new overnight camping facilities. Its current visitor base could be expanded from serving primarily day-use boat anglers to serving the demand for camping generated by anglers, local residents from the Chico and Hamilton City areas, as well as non-local visitors to the region. Proposed facilities and improvements being considered at the Irvine Finch Recreation Area include improvements to the existing boat launch ramp to accommodate vessels of various sizes, expanding parking for both vehicles and boat trailers, and the development of a moderate-scale overnight campground.

Considerations for an expanded day-use and overnight facilities at Irvine Finch are based on existing use patterns and the need to meet the demand for local camping opportunities. Currently, the Irvine Finch facility experiences substantial use during seasonal fish “runs,” such as the salmon run that takes place during late summer and early fall. During these peak fishing periods, this facility commonly operates at full capacity. High use levels result in delays in boat launching and difficulty finding parking. By expanding capacity at this facility, these capacity issues could be resolved. In addition, there is a substantial demand for overnight camping facilities in the local area because of the lack of existing facilities in the greater Chico area. Overnight camping facilities could primarily serve anglers and other recreational boaters that use the boat launch facility, as well as family and small group campers from the local Chico area that do not currently have local access to camping opportunities.

In addition, improvements to the existing boat launch ramp at Irvine Finch are being considered as part of this plan. The existing launch facility was originally developed for non-motorized boat access, namely inner tubes, for floats down the river. Subsequently, improvements have been made to the boat ramp to accommodate standard motorized boats. However, based on its current dimensions and configuration, the boat launch cannot accommodate larger vessels because of sedimentation at the bottom of the ramp. By implementing regularly scheduled maintenance and dredging, this boat ramp can be used by

**Exhibit 3-1**

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Exhibit 3-1

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additional users, namely those boat owners that cannot currently launch their boats at this facility.

The existing parking area may be expanded to accommodate existing and projected use levels at Irvine Finch. The parking expansion could be located on the Beard addition, adjacent to the existing parking lot to the south. This parking area could serve day-users, boaters, and overnight campers. The size of the expansion would be dependent on the level of campground development and existing use levels at the time of development; at this time, it is estimated that a parking expansion may be roughly double the existing parking capacity at Irvine Finch.

A new overnight campground is also being considered for development on the Beard Addition south of the existing Irvine Finch facility. The campground could include family and group campsites, and is envisioned to be a moderate-scale facility (e.g., roughly 50 family and 3 group campsites). The precise size and layout of the campground would be determined during project-specific planning. Campsites would likely include standard amenities, such as concrete picnic tables, fire pits, food lockers, and parking. This facility could be developed in conjunction with the existing day-use area and boat launch facility to offer an integrated, multi-use, recreational destination for Park visitors.

One additional feature of the Irvine Finch facility is that it could serve as the start point for a potential canoe trail that would link the various discontinuous Park subunits. The canoe trail would follow the meander of the Sacramento River, ultimately ending at the Big Chico Creek Riparian Area. Because the canoe trail would technically be located entirely on Park property, it is intended to represent a concept that visitors can choose to experience and could be facilitated by designated put-in and take-out facilities offered on Park property. It is envisioned that the canoe trail could include interpretive and informational signage along the Sacramento River that describes the history and resources associated with the river, guidance on watershed stewardship, and identification of public properties along the river; the siting and design of signage would consider the natural aesthetics of the river corridor and would need to be designed to withstand seasonal flooding and other physical factors. Because the river transects various public and private properties, this effort would require close coordination with local public and private landowners.

Based on the types of recreational facilities being considered at Irvine Finch, there may also be opportunities for concessions to provide products and services that would facilitate the recreational experience. Products offered could include firewood and other camping supplies serving overnight visitors. Services may include kayak/canoe or inner-tube rentals during peak river events. The establishment of concessionaires would be evaluated as facilities are developed and as demand warrants.

## Summary of Potential Facilities Considered for the Irvine Finch Recreation Area

- ▶ Regular maintenance of the Irvine Finch boat ramp to accommodate larger vessels.
- ▶ New overnight campground, including family and group campsites, at the Beard Addition.
- ▶ Parking expansion to serve day-users, boaters, and overnight campers.

### SUNSET RANCH ADDITION

As described in Section 2.3, the Department is currently considering the addition of the Sunset Ranch property located just east of the Sacramento River, south of SR 32, and as such, it has been included in the General Plan planning process. The characteristics of this property, namely its proximity to SR 32 and the Sacramento River, as well as the fact that it contains predominantly non-native vegetation, lends this property to exceptional opportunities for new recreational and interpretive facilities. This property is envisioned as the primary day-use destination for the northern portion of the Park, potentially serving a broad range of visitor-types and catering to both planned destination and en-route visitors traveling in the region. Facilities being considered at Sunset Ranch include a visitor center, day-use area, and trailhead to multi-agency trail system; it could also serve as the administrative headquarters for the Park and other units in the Valley Sector.

The facilities being considered at Sunset Ranch are based on the need to provide a centralized access point to the Park from SR 32. Because this property is located adjacent to other public lands managed by the USFWS and CDFG, it also offers opportunities for multi-agency teaming efforts, in terms of development of facilities, which are consistent with the mission of all three agencies. Its location on the Sacramento River also allows for potential additional riverbank access that would supplement access provided by the boat ramp found at the Irvine Finch subunit on the west side of the river.

A visitor center could serve as the focal point of the Sunset Ranch property. The type of visitor center that would be developed is dependent on potential multi-agency teaming opportunities that could be implemented to develop such a facility. At a minimum, the visitor center could take the form of a small-scale, permanent facility that serves as the point of information distribution and would consist of a range of interpretive displays focusing on the history of the Park and the region. On the other end of the spectrum, a multi-agency visitor center could take the form of a large-scale destination center in and of itself, serving the interests of the Department, USFWS and CDFG, and could include theme-based exhibits and a gift shop. A recent study in the project area has also explored the opportunities for a research center that could also be integrated into the visitor center concept that would aid in the research objectives of the agencies involved.

A new day-use area could also be developed at Sunset Ranch in conjunction with a visitor center. This moderately sized day-use area is foreseen to be the most intensely developed of the Park's day-use areas (e.g., approximately 10–15 family picnic areas and one large group area that can be reserved for special events). This facility could also offer additional

recreational amenities such as shade ramadas, lawn/play areas for children, etc. In addition, flush restroom facilities could be installed that connect to an onsite wastewater treatment and disposal system.

The Sunset Ranch property would also likely serve as the trailhead location for a potential multi-agency trail that connects the Park to the Pine Creek Unit of the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge operated by the USFWS and the Sacramento River Wildlife Area operated by CDFG. Based on its location and potential integration with other proposed facilities (i.e., visitor center and day-use area), the Sunset Ranch property could serve as an ideal staging area for visitors to explore the different land management approaches and recreational opportunities offered by the substantial amount of public land in the project area. The precise alignment of the multi-agency trail would need to be coordinated with the other public land managers prior to development in order to avoid potential land use conflicts.

Finally, the Sunset Ranch property would be considered for the location of a new administrative headquarters for Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park (the existing administrative facilities at Indian Fishery would be removed). Day-to-day Park operations could be based out of the existing residence on the property, which would be converted to a Park office. Maintenance equipment could be stored at the barn adjacent to the proposed office location. There is another barn structure adjacent to the river at the Sunset Ranch property, which based on its age and composition, may be historically significant. There may be opportunities to restore this barn to interpret the agricultural significance of the region.

### **Summary of Potential Facilities Considered for the Sunset Ranch Addition**

- ▶ New administrative center (relocated from Indian Fishery).
- ▶ New day-use area.
- ▶ New visitor center that could serve multiple public land agencies.
- ▶ Potential for new multi-agency loop trail and associated trailhead.

### **PINE CREEK LANDING**

The Pine Creek Landing subunit, which provides motorized boat access and limited day-use facilities, is currently operating at full capacity. The existing boat ramp has been recently expanded and improved; however, ongoing maintenance of this facility is critical for optimal use. In addition, there is the need to expand parking facilities at Pine Creek, but based on the extent of current property boundaries, there is insufficient room to provide additional access at this time. As a result, no new facilities are proposed at Pine Creek Landing as part of this General Plan. If new properties are added to the Park in the future that are in proximity to this subunit, potential opportunities for additional parking and other ancillary facilities will be explored.

## Summary of Potential Facilities Considered at Pine Creek Landing

- ▶ Ongoing maintenance of existing boat launch facility.
- ▶ Provision of additional parking as demand warrants based on the availability of land.

### INDIAN FISHERY

The Indian Fishery subunit consists of the contiguous area that has historically been referred to as Indian Fishery to the north and Old Chico Landing to the south. For the most part, Indian Fishery is located further inland, providing access to an oxbow lake, but it does not provide direct access to the Sacramento River (although informal trails do connect this subunit to the river at certain locations). This subunit is envisioned to serve as a centralized access point for visitors accessing the Park on the east side of the river. It could offer both developed and passive recreational opportunities at one location, thereby appealing to a range of potential visitors. Facilities being considered at this location include a new family/group day-use area and the expansion of the existing loop trail that could be implemented in conjunction with the existing day-use area and potential relocation of the existing administrative facilities.

The potential new day-use area could be located at the location of the existing administrative center, which consists of several modular office buildings, which are being considered for relocation. A new day-use area would augment existing day-use facilities located north of the administrative center, and therefore, would be small to moderate in size (e.g., approximately 7–10 family picnic areas) with standard amenities, such as picnic tables, and barbecues. This facility could also be served by flush restroom facilities that could be connected to an onsite wastewater disposal system already developed at the site. In an effort to develop this area as a central point of access to the Park, a developed entrance may be constructed that could potentially consist of an entrance kiosk and/or signage that could be used to better track visitation and provide current information to visitors about the Park and special events. In addition, the existing day-use area located to the north of the proposed facility would be maintained at its current size in an effort to enhance the prominence of a new day-use area. As the central access point, a new day-use area could serve as the gathering point for interpretive and educational programs and could be developed to accommodate bus parking and turn-around space.

More passive recreational opportunities could also be provided at Indian Fishery through the expansion of the existing trail system. The trail system could be expanded to the south of the existing alignment, thereby providing access to the dense riparian vegetation that characterizes the essence of the Park. Such a trail system could be designed in a loop fashion to expose trail users to the unique resources that vary across the periphery of the property, including the abundant wildlife and scenic vistas that would serve visitors participating in wildlife viewing and other sight-seeing activities. It may also serve as the connector to the informal trails that provide access to the Sacramento River.

## Summary of Potential Facilities Considered at Indian Fishery

- ▶ Relocation of existing administrative center to a more centralized location.
- ▶ New family/group day-use area at the location of the existing administrative center.
- ▶ Ongoing operation and use of existing day-use area.
- ▶ Expansion of existing loop trail system to the southern portion of the subunit.

## BIG CHICO CREEK RIPARIAN AREA

The Big Chico Creek Riparian Area consists of the western and eastern properties of the existing Big Chico Creek Riparian Area (divided by River Road), and the proposed Singh Orchard addition. For planning purposes, these properties are considered one subunit based on their location, proximity to each other, and similar physical characteristics. This subunit, located partially on the banks of the Sacramento River, is envisioned as a place for visitors to experience the vast riparian resources that are native to this stretch of the Sacramento River, while engaging in active restoration and protection of these resources so that they can be enjoyed in perpetuity.

The facilities being considered at the Big Chico Creek Riparian Area are based on the need to improve and expand access to this area, while balancing the sensitive nature of the resources present. There are limited opportunities for visitors to gain access to this area, with only one developed entrance road serving the property west of River Road, which provides access to the Sacramento River. No formal access exists to the property east of River Road or the proposed Singh Orchard addition. The Department is considering proposals to provide increased public access through a variety of low-impact improvements and facilities that would serve the entire Big Chico Creek Riparian Area, including the expansion of the existing entrance road on the property west of River Road, a non-motorized boat launch and environmental (or primitive) campsites on the property east of River Road, and a loop trail that would connect all three properties.

The potential expansion of the existing access road at the Big Chico Creek property may entail two components: (1) widening the road to allow for parallel parking along the road shoulder, and (2) developing formal parking spaces in conjunction with the existing turn-around at the end of the entrance road. By allowing for additional vehicles in this popular fishing and day-use area, this area could provide additional capacity for anglers and other visitors utilizing the resources associated with the Sacramento River. An improved entrance road could also facilitate emergency vehicle access as needed during peak recreation periods. The entrance road would continue to be subject to closure during the winter season.

A non-motorized boat launch area could be developed along Big Chico Creek on the east side of River Road. The boat launch area would likely be developed along the southern border of the property, in the vicinity of the area under the existing River Road bridge. This facility would be intended to serve primarily kayakers/canoers, as well as those visitors with other car-top boats; it would not be intended to serve motorized vessels based on the shallow

nature of Big Chico Creek at this location. To provide access to the boat launch facility, a road and a path would need to be installed and a small to moderate parking area developed (e.g., approximately 10–25 parking spaces) that could serve the entire Big Chico Creek Riparian Area. The size and configuration of such a parking area would be dependent on a range of factors, including which facilities would be served and the availability of other parking areas serving this area.

Further upstream from the proposed boat launch area, the property east of River Road is also conducive to the development of a small-scale environmental campground (e.g., approximately 10 family/group campsites). The defining characteristics of environmental (or primitive) campsites are that they result in little to no impact to physical resources of the area and offer greater solitude to visitors than standard developed campsites, which is accomplished mainly by prohibiting motor vehicle access to the campground. Other features of an environmental campground could include small picnic tables, chemical restrooms, prohibiting the gathering of firewood or campfires, and prohibiting pets on site. Access to the campground could be provided by a short walk from the proposed boat launch area and/or directly from Big Chico Creek.

In an effort to integrate the Big Chico Creek area, a proposed loop trail would also be considered that would connect existing and proposed facilities into one functional subunit. The trailhead would likely be developed in proximity to the proposed parking area on the east side of River Road. The alignment of the loop trail would be such that it provides access to all three properties that comprise the complex, allows visitors to access proposed facilities, and exposes visitors to various types of vegetation and other physical resources, including the Big Chico Creek and the Sacramento River. Consideration must be given to safe access across River Road in connecting the properties. Trail amenities may include interpretive panels and other informational signage as directed by the interpretive element of the General Plan.

### **Summary of Potential Facilities Considered at the Big Chico Creek Riparian Area**

- ▶ Car-top boat access area along Big Chico Creek.
- ▶ Environmental (or primitive) campground on the property east of River Road.
- ▶ Expansion of fishing access through improvements to existing entrance road.
- ▶ Loop trail system and trailhead that would connect all properties.

### **3.3.3 SITE-SELECTION CRITERIA**

The proposed Facilities Plan for Bidwell-Sacramento River State Park recommends the development of recreational and administrative facilities throughout the Park, including potential property additions. Although these three potential property additions have been identified by the Department as appropriate for inclusion in the General Plan, there is some degree of uncertainty whether these properties will ultimately be transferred to the Department because no formal agreements are in place. In addition, circumstances may change on

existing Park properties that may result in situations that do not lend themselves to facility development as envisioned in the General Plan. Therefore, the potential exists that facilities that are proposed throughout the Park may not be constructed at these particular locations. Because many of these facilities and/or improvements have been identified by the Department as being integral to the future development of the Park in terms of meeting visitor needs and promoting the vision of the Park, a set of site-selection criteria has been developed that will allow the Department to evaluate other potential property additions for their appropriateness for certain types of recreational facilities if they are not developed on the properties considered in this General Plan. These criteria have been developed such that if other properties are acquired and developed with comparable facilities, proposed developments would result in comparable levels of environmental effects as the proposals identified in this plan.

The site-selection criteria vary based on the type of facility or improvement proposed. Criteria have been established for the following facilities: campgrounds, day-use areas, visitor center, administrative center, and trails.

### **CAMPGROUNDS AND DAY-USE AREAS**

Properties that are added to the Park may generally be considered appropriate for campground and day-use facilities if the following criteria are met:

- ▶ Non-native vegetation.
- ▶ Located out of sensitive-species habitat.
- ▶ Close proximity to other Park subunits to offer opportunities for integration of facilities.
- ▶ Ability to provide water supply and wastewater disposal capabilities.
- ▶ Easy access from regional roadway network.

### **VISITOR CENTER**

Properties that are added to the Park may generally be considered appropriate for a visitor center if the following criteria are met:

- ▶ *Same as criteria for campgrounds and day-use areas, plus*
- ▶ Subject to minimal flooding.
- ▶ Proximity to other public lands in the region to allow for multi-agency teaming opportunities.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER**

Properties that are added to the Park may generally be considered appropriate for an administrative center if the following criteria are met:

- ▶ Subject to minimal flooding.

- ▶ Existing facilities that would allow storage of maintenance equipment.
- ▶ Centralized location that would allow for comparable travel times to the various Park subunits.

## TRAILS

Properties that are added to the Park may generally be considered appropriate for trails facilities if the following criteria are met:

- ▶ *All properties would be considered appropriate for trail facilities.*

### 3.4 MANAGEMENT OF VISITOR USE IMPACTS (CARRYING CAPACITY)

Public Resources Code Sections 5001.96 and 5019.5 require that the land carrying capacity shall be determined before any Park development plan is adopted, and that attendance at State Park System units shall be held within the limits established by this capacity. A definition of carrying capacity by the code, however, is not provided.

#### 3.4.1 CHARACTERIZATION OF CARRYING CAPACITY

The carrying capacity of land is developed by evaluating the interaction between land uses and natural systems and determining how these interactions will affect, over time, the land's integrity and sustainability. Maximum capacity is the point where land regeneration is exceeded by demands made on natural systems and there is resulting degradation or destruction of the systems. Carrying capacity not only relates to the area's environmental resources but also the quality of the visitor experience.

In terms of Park and recreation planning, carrying capacity may be extended in meaning to suggest that no cumulative net losses will be permitted to occur in any of the unit's resource values (natural, cultural, aesthetic, or recreational) because of human use (activities or facility development). However, seemingly insignificant effects can have a permanent impact on resource values. Therefore, the intent of the Public Resource Code is to avoid degradation of resource-based Park systems. The great variety of factors involved in damage to natural resources and the complexity of the interactions among the factors makes establishing a carrying capacity number difficult. Visitation, individual or group usage, time, and types and patterns of recreational use all contribute to the impact on resource systems. To aid in impact minimization, management can regulate capacity limits and land use, enact mitigation measures, educate and interpret for the public, and ensure proper design. Determination of resource location and significance allows management to create future guidelines for public use of a Park and access to it.

#### 3.4.2 ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Adaptive management is a tool to address carrying capacity (or allowable use intensity) issues and is included in the guidelines within this Plan. Adaptive management is an ongoing, intensive process of determining desired conditions, selecting and monitoring indicators and

standards that reflect these desired conditions, and taking management action when the desired conditions are not being realized.

The desired conditions for the Park are reflected in the goals presented in Section 3.2, particularly those pertaining to visitor experience and resource protection. If the Department determines that the entire Park or a specific area of the Park is not meeting the goals, then desired conditions would not have been realized and management action would be initiated. Management action could determine that the violation was caused by natural variation (e.g., increased bank erosion caused by meandering river) or by human-induced variables (e.g., trampling associated with increasing hiking activities). Actions to manage or limit visitor use would be implemented when the desired condition was not met because of impacts associated with visitor use. Management actions could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ▶ Site management (e.g., facility design, barriers, site hardening, area/facility closure, redirection of visitors to suitable sites),
- ▶ Regulation (e.g., the number of people, the location or time of visits, permitted activities, or allowable equipment),
- ▶ Enforcement of regulations (e.g., patrols, notification, citations),
- ▶ Education (e.g., information signs and exhibits, interpretive programs, visitor center exhibits, brochures and fliers, public meetings, meetings with user groups), and
- ▶ Altering access (e.g., parking in proximity to sensitive resources, bike access, etc.).

Following the implementation of the management action, monitoring would be conducted to determine if the desired outcome is being achieved. If it is, then the Park is being operated within its carrying capacity. If the desired outcome is not being achieved, then alternative management actions would be carried out until the desired outcome is achieved.

### **3.4.3 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INDICATORS AT THE PARK**

Desired conditions, which are reflected in the goals and guidelines in this Plan, may be measured by assessing whether environmental quality indicators have been achieved. Successful results would be attained if the monitoring process is not too demanding of staff time and resources. For example, if the environmental quality indicators are physical conditions that are observable during the day-to-day operational activities of Park personnel, then the monitoring process would occur continuously with minimum administrative burden. Qualitative standards are preferred if quantitative monitoring and analyses are time- and resource-consuming, but may not produce necessary data. In all cases, however, the environmental quality indicators should be good predictors of the desired outcome. Thus, for some desired outcomes (e.g., sustainable populations of special-status species), the indicator monitoring processes may require field surveys undertaken by specialized staff.

Table 3-1 contains environmental quality indicators based on some of the goals in this Plan and their associated desired outcomes. Environmental quality indicators may be refined

occasionally, based on site-specific knowledge, recent observations in the field, and updates in scientific understandings, if it is discovered that the existing environmental quality indicators are not the best predictors of the desired outcome. For example, it may be that reported increases in catches of salmon are a result of increasing fishing activities rather than an increase in salmon population. If this is discovered to be the case, then a new indicator would be developed for monitoring purposes.

**Table 3-1**

**Carrying Capacity**

Goal	Desired Outcome / Standard	Environmental Quality Indicators <sup>1</sup>
<p><b>Goal ER-1.2:</b> Manage for the perpetuation of special-status plant, terrestrial wildlife, and aquatic species within the Park, in accordance with state and federal laws.</p>	<p>Sustainable populations of special-status plant and wildlife species</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Increased occurrence of special-status plants species.</li> <li>✓ Active nest sites.</li> <li>✓ Presence of suitable habitat.</li> <li>✓ Abundance of prey species.</li> <li>✓ Report of increased fish catches.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Overall Goal ER-2:</b> Protect the cultural and historical resources within the Park, providing interpretive and educational opportunities, where feasible.</p>	<p>Retention of the integrity and value of cultural resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Lack of disturbance to known archaeological sites.</li> <li>✓ Retention of historic building facades.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal ER-3.2:</b> Operate Park facilities and manage resources in a manner that does not contribute to degradation in water quality of the watershed.</p>	<p>Water quality in adjacent water bodies that meets established standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Lack of bank erosion where foot or bicycle traffic are known to occur.</li> <li>✓ Proper functioning of water quality control devices such as grassy swales and grease traps after storm events.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal ER-4.2:</b> Develop public viewpoints serving the Park’s scenic resources, focusing on views of the Sacramento River from different locations throughout the Park.</p>	<p>Viewpoints available to the public that offer views of the river and its other natural riparian features.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Views that are unhindered by growing vegetation in the foreground.</li> <li>✓ Lack of new buildings or other major structures within the viewshed.</li> <li>✓ Lack of overcrowding at the viewpoints on a regular basis.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal VU-1.1:</b> Expand boat launching facilities serving motorized and non-motorized boating activity based on availability of appropriate sites.</p>	<p>Boat launch facilities that are sufficient for the types of boats used by visitors in the Sacramento River. Boat launch areas that can accommodate all visitors who come to the Park for its boat launching opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Sufficient parking spaces to accommodate all visitors who come to use the boat launches.</li> <li>✓ Wear and tear that is consistent with the expected life of the structure.</li> <li>✓ Lack of visitor comments that the boat launches are insufficient for their boats.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Environmental Quality Indicators may be updated by Park staff based on field observations, new scientific knowledge, etc.

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