Butte Creek Ecological Preserve: Proposal to conduct site assessment

Summary:

There is currently an effort being made to establish native plants on highly disturbed areas of the Butte Creek Ecological Preserve. The University has been using the BCEP as a restoration site and entered into several agreements with public and private entities to restore and maintain various plants and plant communities. The BCEP has recently accepted mature elderberry bushes to grow and maintain. In addition, Caltrans has contracted with the Foundation to restore oak woodlands and riparian systems on the site.

The University is seeking to conduct a biological assessment to determine if the current restoration efforts are successful. In addition, we are seeking a consultant to determine if it is physically and financially feasible to conduct various types of restoration on the site.

Background:

The BCEP was purchased by The California State University, Chico Research Foundation (Research Foundation) in December of 1998 with funding provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, CALFED, and the Wildlife Conservation Board. The Research Foundation manages and maintains BCEP through the Bidwell Environmental Institute which is the administrative organization for the BCEP as well as the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve.

Located in Butte County within the Sacramento River Valley, the BCEP sits on 93 acres of oak woodland and includes 4,000 feet of creek frontage, with critical riparian corridor adjacent to spawning and holding pools supporting several priority species and habitats, primarily the spring-run Chinook salmon and steelhead trout. BCEP staff includes a Reserve Manager, Field Director and a Project Manager who work together to achieve project goals, plus volunteers and student interns from CSU, Chico.

Through a unique visitation program, the BCEP has implemented restoration planting on over 10 acres of the property with an 83% vegetation success rate and educated thousands of people from school aged to the college and community level about the importance of restoration and the need to reduce detrimental impacts on our natural capital.

Information Needed:

Before the University can enter into new contractual agreements to conduct restoration, some basic questions need to be resolved. Since restoration agreements are long term, frequently lasting longer than the staff who implements them, it is imperative that we gain maximum scientific knowledge of the site.
1. Are the existing restoration attempts cited above successful? Are the plants self-sufficient?
2. Is the site, or portions of the site, suitable for restoration? If so, identify suitable areas and identify species that should be restored.
3. If portions of the site can be restored, what measures should be followed to achieve a self-sufficient system?
4. Should efforts be made at this site to establish a climax community, such as valley oak woodland?
5. In your estimation, how can this site be valuable to the University and community?