

BIG CHICO CREEK ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

— PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS —

FOREST HEALTH PROJECTS IN BIG CHICO CREEK CANYON

Students and staff are working on over 1,000 acres of projects focused on forest health, habitat improvement, and catastrophic wildfire mitigation, including work on private lands and in Bidwell Park. Students often have financial difficulty with purchasing some of the basic gear to accomplish this work. Thanks to your support many students received wildland fire boot scholarships allowing them to participate safely in prescribed fire projects.

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES: WILDLAND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Applications are now being submitted for the third cohort of the interdisciplinary master's program in wildland management. There has been an average cohort of ten students, from a variety of backgrounds with unique professional and educational experiences. With your support we can purchase their research equipment and provide most graduate students with a paying job. Below are a few examples of their work:

MAMMAL RESEARCH



Karina Haddad's thesis is *Ecology of Mammalian Predators in the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve*. She has distributed game cameras, a \$20,000 equipment purchase, throughout the Reserve to study the movement of mammal predators in relation to forest health projects and their type of disturbance on the landscape. With the help of these cameras an endangered Pacific Fisher was found at the Reserve, the lowest elevation sighting within our watershed. This an exciting measurement of the habitat improvement projects we have been conducting.

NATIVE FISH PASSAGE

Paige Jacobsen's master project is a *Community Engagement Plan for the Iron Canyon Native Fish Passage Project*. Paige's project will engage the public and provide support for The Iron Canyon Fish Passage Project, which will result in unimpeded fish passage beyond Iron Canyon in Big Chico Creek. Steelhead and spring-run Chinook salmon will be returned to their historical habitats, leading to improved viability for these struggling



populations. The fish passage will be restored by reconfiguring the river channel to mimic a natural channel form that is completely passable at a range of streamflow. This is a collaborative project between the CSU, Chico Ecological Reserves, CalTrout, the Mechoopda Tribe of Chico Rancheria, the City of Chico, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

HWY 32 WILDLIFE CROSSING

Marian Furumi's culminating project is the *HWY 32 Wildlife Crossing Feasibility Study*. Marian is partnering with landowners neighboring the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve and the California Department of Transportation to gather data around the number and diversity of species of wildlife that cross HWY 32. The goal is to assess the need for a wildlife over- or undercrossing along HWY 32. The California Department of Transportation has already expressed interest in funding the project based on Marian's observations.



TRIBAL STUDENT SUCCESS

Along with the project examples above, we are proud to celebrate the first two graduates of the Wildland Management Program who successfully defended their theses and will graduate with distinction in a few weeks. Cole Morales and He-Lo Ramirez, our first graduates, are both local tribal members. Cole's project was *Applying and Integrating GIS for Tribal Use: A Project that Incorporated*

GIS in Cultural Resource Management for Northern California Tribes, and He-Lo's project was *Improving Northwestern Maidu Education in Northern California: A Need for and Creation of Place-Based Culturally Relevant Curricula*. In collaborating with local tribes both projects helped culturally significant priorities move forward.



FOREST THERAPY

Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserves is playing a vital role in helping our communities to heal and create a culture of health and wellness. Following the Camp Fire, BCCER received funding from the North Valley Community Foundation's Butte Strong Fund to train and certify fifteen local mental health providers, outdoor educators, and community leaders to become Forest Therapy Guides. In September of 2021, **The Ecotherapy for Student Wellness Program** was created through a partnership between the WellCat Counseling Center and the Ecological Reserves to provide services to students struggling with unprecedented mental health challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the program's formation, we are proud to have been able to serve over 1,400 students, 150

staff and faculty, and 500 community members. We are honored to serve our community with the healing work of forest and nature therapy. During a Forest Therapy Experience, a Camp Fire survivor said, “This is the first time since the fire that I have been able to feel the wind on my face and have it be pleasant and pleasurable, instead of triggering. I can’t tell you how amazing that feels.”



FUTURE PROJECTS

With your continued support, we are developing several exciting projects. We are in the preliminary stages of assessing a Tule Elk reintroduction project with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife as well as a prescribed burn collaborative module with Feather River College. We have also received funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to develop environmental compliance and surveying curriculum for community college in Northern California and with the lab component of the curriculum taking place on land owned by the Mountain Maidu Consortium. Thank you for your participation in this important work—your support is vital to our success.

We are profoundly grateful to the Dempsey Family whose extraordinary legacy will continue in perpetuity to help build our program, bringing unique experiences to the students we serve while stewarding the land we love.

MAKE A GIFT

To learn more about the many ways you can support the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve, please contact Daria Booth at 530-898-4054, dbooth3@csuchico.edu, or go to www.csuchico.edu/bccer.



Where Education Meets the Land

