



Butte County Association of Governments eNewsletter Summer 2010

State Route 149 Fresh Water Marsh & Vernal Pool Preserves - How Have They Changed in Four Years?

It has been four years since BCAG in partnership with Caltrans District 3, established the State Route 149 Fresh Water Marsh and Vernal Pool preserves just adjacent to the highway project. Both the marsh and vernal pool preserves were required mitigations for the approved construction of the SR 149 highway project.

Under an agreement with Caltrans District 3, BCAG contracted the design and construction of a 38.11 acre fresh water marsh, and 425 acre vernal pool/open space preserves per the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit for the project. The consultant chosen to prepare the design and construct the marsh and vernal pool sites was Restoration Resources and H.T. Harvey & Associates from Rocklin California. The construction of the marsh and vernal pool preserves were completed in 2006.

An additional responsibility for BCAG in accepting the role to design and construct of both the marsh and vernal pool preserves was the ongoing job to maintain and monitor the preserves

annually. To assist BCAG with the ongoing maintenance and monitoring, Wildlife Heritage Foundation was contracted with to manage the marsh and vernal pool preserve sites and prepare all required annual monitoring reports which are provide to state and federal regulatory agencies. Funding for the ongoing maintenance and monitoring is provided through an endowment that was included as part of the costs for constructing the preserve projects. The endowment is also managed by Wildlife Heritage Foundation under BCAG's oversight.

Annually, Wildlife Heritage Foundation has prepared the required Monitoring Reports for the marsh and vernal pool sites. The Monitoring Reports document the annual inspection tasks include checking of fencing around the marsh, evaluation of any erosion and fire hazards and identification of any prohibited activities that could be occurring on the property.

In addition to the general tasks, a biological inspection of the marsh must be made as well. Biological monitoring

tasks include an evaluation of the hydrological functioning of the marsh as intended; analysis of the upland and riparian plantings and their growth and overall health. The annual monitoring report also includes observation list of the species that were observed at the marsh site during monitoring visits.

As of June 2010, the fresh water marsh and vernal pool preserves are doing exceptionally well according to the reports. The marsh is functioning as it was intended and the vegetative plantings are thriving and providing for habitat of several bird varieties.

In December 2009 when Wildlife Heritage Foundation was on site to do inspection of the three vernal pool wetland habitat types located within the vernal pool preserve - *vernal pools*, *seasonal and perennial creeks*, and *emergent marsh*. Overall, the vernal pool preserve is functioning well and it was concluded that the return of cattle grazing will help control grassland weeds and most likely extend the vernal pool hydro period.



The photo on the left was taken out at the fresh water marsh in 2008; the photo on the right was taken in July 2010 from approximately the same vantage point. The amount of vegetative growth that has occurred is significant and provides a positive indication that the fresh water marsh preserve is functioning as intended.



New Fixed Route Changes Coming to B-Line Service

Butte Regional Transit or the *B-Line* is in the process of implementing several new improvements to the fixed route bus network serving the cities, town and county of Butte. These fixed route changes come as the result of a multi-year *Market Based Transit Study* coordinated by BCAG and initiated in February 2009. In June 2010, the BCAG Board of Directors approved several of the recommendations from the transit study and staff is in the process of putting these new service changes into effect. The goal of the Market Based Transit Study was to evaluate the efficiency, responsiveness (to consumer needs) and public perception of the B-Line Fixed Route System. There were four primary tasks associated with this study included:

- Evaluation of the existing fixed route system
- Conduct market research and community outreach
- Develop four service alternatives
- Analyze and recommend a preferred alternative

Transit Resource Center (TRC), a nationally recognized transit consultant firm, was selected by BCAG to develop the study for Butte Regional Transit. Assisting BCAG staff and TRC was a Project Development Team (PDT) that included key stakeholders from several organizations and agencies that utilize Butte Regional Transit services within the county. PDT representatives included staff from the cities, Town of Paradise, County of Butte, CSU Chico, Butte College, local social service agencies and BCAG Board members Jane Dolan and Ann Schwab. The PDT met six times throughout the course of the project providing valuable input regarding the course of action and proposed alternatives.



Evaluation of the existing fixed route network was done through the review of a 2008 Ridership Survey, monthly and annual ridership reports and two passenger surveys; one a random phone survey of Butte County residents and the other a targeted e-survey of CSUC and Butte College students and local/regional commuters as well as a series of public participation meetings within the jurisdictions. The results of these surveys and meetings formed the basis for the proposed changes in each of the four service alternatives.

A positive result from the surveys was the broad recognition and use of the B-Line fixed route system. According to the survey data, between 12% and 24% of respondents currently use the B-Line at least occasionally (respondents to the e-survey indicating at least once per month). Approximately 66-83% would consider using the service with changes being made. This degree of brand recognition is excellent in the transit world.

Based on the above mentioned information, the consultants developed four service alternatives to be reviewed by the PDT. These four alternatives included:

- A 10% decrease in annual service hours
- The reallocation of the current annual service hours

- A 10% increase in annual service hours
- A Market Based approach (an alternative designed to meet all service needs as indicated in the survey responses).

Based on the survey results and other study data analyzed, it was the recommendation of the PDT to develop a plan which reallocated the current services hours to better meet passenger needs (**Alternative #2**).

Following this recommendation and direction from the PDT, BCAG staff and the consultant developed a plan to revise parts of the current fixed route system to reflect the following recommended changes:

Chico – Implement a new route with 15 minute headways during commute hours, restructure underproductive routes and improve timing

Oroville – Several structure changes to Routes 20, 24, 25, 26 and 27

Paradise – Changes to Route 40, 41 and 46

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