

SCOPE OF WORK

Simmon's Ranch Property Acquisition

Phase I of the Big Chico Creek Wildlife Preserve

Submitted to the Anadromous Fish Restoration Program (AFRP)

of the

US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

by the

CSU, Chico Research Foundation

on behalf of

The Big Chico Creek Watershed Alliance (BCCWA)

I. Scope of Work

The Simmon's Ranch is a pristine 2,724-acre site located ten miles upstream from the City of Chico. While called a ranch the property is virtually untouched or impacted by human activities. The stunning canyon locale has high-quality habitat consisting primarily of riparian and upland coniferous forests. It adjoins Bidwell Park, the second largest municipal park in the United States. The acquisition of the Simmon's Ranch will begin the formation of the Big Chico Creek Ecological Preserve to be managed in perpetuity by the University Research Foundation.

This project seeks the initial funding to acquire a 2,724-acre site in the Big Chico Creek watershed known as the Simmon's Ranch. The property under negotiation is being offered for \$3,700,000. This proposal requests \$500,000 from the USFWS AFRP to initiate the acquisition.

Simmon's Ranch consists of several large parcels of land. There are two parcels that contain creekside property, one 368 acres and the other 634 acres. This funding request is proportional to the purchase of the 368-acre parcel, or approximately 13% of the total asking price of the property. Future funding requests may be submitted to the USFWS at a later date to help pay for the other creekside parcel.

Of the \$500,000 requested, \$450,000 will be used for acquisition and \$50,000 will be used for the following project activities.

The Watershed Projects Office of CSU, Chico will:

Seek additional funding to acquire the full property. Possible funding sources include the Wildlife Conservation Board, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

Establish an endowment fund, using non-federal dollars, with which to manage the property in perpetuity as a fish and wildlife preserve.

Initiate a property management strategy that will include coordination and input from agency representatives, adjacent landowners, and local government.

The Simmon's Ranch is the first of a two-phase development of the Big Chico Creek Ecological Preserve (totaling 4,124 acres). Once complete, the Preserve will protect five

miles of Big Chico Creek from ridgeline to ridgeline, essentially the watershed boundary.

II. Project Benefits

The project has three primary benefits:

1)Contribute to the restoration of the Big Chico Creek spring-run chinook salmon and winter steelhead runs. Big Chico Creek is one of only four streams in the Sacramento Valley that provide habitat for a wild, persistent population of spring run salmon. The Big Chico Creek Ecological Preserve is part of a larger strategy taking shape to bring back the substantial runs of chinook salmon and steelhead that characterized Big Chico Creek before the 1970's. In 1998 an estimated 369 adult spring-run salmon entered into Big Chico Creek, the largest count since 1963. A study by the Department of Fish and Game estimated the emigration of juvenile spring-run salmon in 1995 was 3,704.

Spring-run chinook salmon typically summer in the deep pools between Iron Canyon and Higgin's Hole. Protection of critical habitat in this middle zone of the creek (between Iron Canyon downstream and Higgins' Hole upstream) is one element of the larger strategy to protect spring-run salmon. The Revised Draft Restoration Plan for the Anadromous Fish Restoration Program, May 30, 1997 identifies the following high priority action for Big Chico Creek:

Protect spring-run chinook salmon summer holding pools by obtaining from willing sellers titles or conservation easements on lands adjacent to the pools.

The habitat in this five-mile reach consists of pools (25.8%) and riffles and runs (74.2%). Twenty pools in this reach meet depth and substrate suitability requirements for holding spring-run salmon. The Simmon's Ranch acquisition would protect 2.5 miles or half of the spring-run holding habitat on Big Chico Creek. The adjacent Henning Ranch, planned as Phase II of the development of the Big Chico Creek Ecological Preserve, would protect the remaining 2.5 miles of holding habitat.

Pockets of spawning-size gravel exist throughout the reach. Though not *prime* spawning habitat due to substrate and seasonal flow conditions, this habitat is the *only* spring-run spawning habitat on Big Chico Creek. Future fishery management activities have the potential to improve both the spawning and holding habitat.

No study of steelhead spawning has been conducted. While population levels of rainbow trout have had an observed increase in the Simmon's Ranch area, there is no way to be sure whether or not they are migratory (steelhead). Historically this area was dominated by three anadromous fish species, the spring-run salmon, steelhead rainbow trout, and the Pacific Lamprey.

2) *Protect and enhance habitat for at risk riparian species.* A recent survey of the Simmon's Ranch found that over 140 different wildlife species utilize the property, 13% of which are listed species (including Species of Special Concern). This middle zone of Big Chico Creek is crucial to the survival of populations of steelhead rainbow trout and spring-run chinook salmon, since adults of the salmon and juveniles of the steelhead spend the summer in the creek. Other aquatic at risk species on the Preserve include amphibians, particularly the California red-legged frog and the Foothill yellow-legged frog, Western Skink, California whiptail, and Chaparral whipsnake. Mammal species include riparian brush rabbit, dusky footed woodrat, vagrant shrew, western small-footed myotis, little brown myotis and black-tailed hare. Bird species at risk include golden eagle, Swainson's hawk, Coopers hawk, Sharp-shinned hawk, American peregrine falcon, spotted owl, yellow warbler and yellow breasted chat.

In addition to the valuable habitat on the property, the Simmon's Ranch also plays a critical role in providing clean, cool water to the lower reaches of the Creek where winter-run chinook salmon and some spring-run chinook salmon rear in the winter and early spring. The Simmons and Henning Ranch compose most of the middle section of the watershed. Downstream and adjacent to the Simmon's Ranch is Bidwell Park, the second largest municipal park in the United States. The opportunity exists to establish a wildlife corridor protected in perpetuity from urban encroachment along Big Chico Creek, from One-mile Dam in the City of Chico to Higgin's Hole approximately 18 miles upstream.

3) *Contribute to scientific knowledge, and public awareness, of the natural processes of Big Chico Creek and its watershed.* A key to the importance of this project is the strong commitment by CSU, Chico to manage the Ecological Preserve as a center for research, teaching and public education. The Research Foundation has been the moving force behind the project, with leadership from Dr. Donald Holtgrieve of the Geography and Planning Department. Chico is the cultural and population center of the North Valley, and this project offers the means for creating greater public awareness of the processes of a riparian ecosystem and the efforts to revitalize the historical runs of anadromous fish.

3. Monitoring and data evaluation

Environmental monitoring and data evaluation are not applicable to this phase of the project. The acquisition project will be evaluated on the ability to raise the remaining money to purchase the property and establish an endowment. Upon project approval, a one-year goal will be set to raise the remaining funds for the purchase of the Simmon's Ranch.

4. Work to be performed and deliverables:

Task 1: Establish escrow fund for property acquisition

Deliverable:

Escrow fund.

Task 2: Establish endowment account.

Deliverable:

Endowment account through the University Research Foundation

Task 3. Perform project development activities

Deliverables:

Quarterly description of grant development activities

Copies of grant applications to foundations and agencies

Task 4. Initiate property management plan

Deliverables:

Meeting minutes and attendance

List of advisory committee members

High resolution air photo(s) of site for management and project development

| Project Phase and Task | Direct Labor hours | Direct Salary and Benefits | Overhead Labor (General, Admin, and Fee) | Service Contracts | Material and Acquisition Contracts | Misc.and Other Direct Costs | Total Cost |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|--|-------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Phase I, Task 1 | | | | | 450,000 | | 450,000.00 |
| Phase I, Tasks 2-4 | | 37,361.90 | 11,882.28 | 0 | 0 | 755.82 | 50,000.00 |
| TOTALS | | 37,361.90 | 11,882.28 | | 450,000 | 755.82 | 500,000.00 |