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For Immediate Release

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Bidwell Ranch Conservation and Mitigation Bank Planning Moving Ahead

River Partners announces plans for citizen involvement

CHICO, CA – 5 January 2007 – Chico-based River Partners announces plan for citizen involvement in the development of a conservation and mitigation bank on the Bidwell Ranch property adjacent to Bidwell Park.

River Partners recently initiated work to develop a conservation and mitigation bank on this environmentally rich property. Working closely with City of Chico staff, agency partners, and the community, River Partners will compile the technical information and produce the necessary documents to submit to federal and state agencies for the bank's approval.

As part of the project, River Partners will develop background information and draft agency agreements, but once complete, the City will decide on whether to move forward with the mitigation bank. "Our goal is to provide a turn key product by completing all the tasks to develop the site as a mitigation bank, and then turn it over to the City to make the decisions on how to proceed," said John Carlon, president of River Partners.

Citizen involvement is an important component of the project. The City selected River Partners in part because of their focus on the establishment of a Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) to provide a vehicle for community participation in the establishment of the bank and management plan. The SAG will focus on the development of the mitigation bank and provide input into the project. River Partners will solicit input from the SAG throughout the process.

"The community has an obvious interest in this property, and we welcome citizens who want to participate in the development of the site as a conservation and wetland mitigation bank," said Dan Efseaff, project manager. "The SAG will provide opportunities for citizens to become familiar with the process and project and provide input."

As part of the project, opportunities for public access will be examined. "This community values public access, and the City has made it clear that public uses that are compatible with use of the site as a mitigation bank should be thoroughly explored," said Efseaff. "We intend to work with

the agencies to look for opportunities to accommodate recreational or educational uses and still meet the primary goal of implementing a state and federally-recognized mitigation bank.”

The project is in the early stages and much of the available information will be refined over a two-year process. The opportunity for public input begins with the first public workshop on the project in late February or early March. River Partners will announce meeting details in the next few weeks. As the project progresses, information will be shared on the River Partners website: www.RiverPartners.org.

Conservation or mitigation banks set aside land for environmental benefits in exchange for allowing development in other areas. Conservation banks protect threatened and endangered upland species habitat, while mitigation banks are usually associated with wetlands. Mitigation banking helps consolidate small, fragmented wetland areas into large contiguous sites which are more valuable wildlife habitat. Conservation and mitigation banks must be approved by the Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Based on the existing habitat, the Bidwell Ranch project could provide both conservation and mitigation banking. “A conservation and wetland mitigation bank is consistent with community values and keeps the profits of the bank for the citizens of Chico,” stated John Carlon, president of River Partners.

River Partners notes that the project may help mitigate wetland impacts associated with City capital projects. If established, the mitigation bank could also streamline the environmental mitigation associated with local private development projects.

“We believe that this project provides an extraordinary opportunity to protect the environment and Chico’s open space, partially offset the costs of the property, and ease the regulatory burdens placed on local projects,” said Efseaff.

Comments or questions may be submitted to Dan Efseaff by email (defseaff@riverpartners.org) or written comments may be submitted to River Partners, 580 Vallombrosa Avenue, Chico, California 95926. Additional information is available by contacting Dan Efseaff at (530) 894-5401.

Since 1998 River Partners has planted over 750,000 native trees and shrubs along the Sacramento, Feather, Tuolumne, Stanislaus and San Joaquin Rivers. River Partners is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to create wildlife habitat for the benefit of people and the environment. More information about River Partners’ projects and program is available at www.RiverPartners.org.

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