



Stop the Sprawl-Save our Hometown

A watershed is exactly that: a basin where all the water runs off into creeks, stream, rivers, lakes and the ocean. Butte Creek's upper basin drains mostly intact conifer forests, healthy meadows, with very little development. There are but a few hundred homes, cabins and businesses in Butte Meadows, Jonesville, Stirling City and Forest Ranch that drain to Butte Creek over nearly a hundred thousand acres. Magalia, Paradise and the Little Butte Creek watershed represents around 10 % of the watershed and, although it was a large urban area, it now has less than half of the homes and businesses prior to the Camp Fire. It is still the largest urban contribution to runoff in Butte Creek. Much of the runoff is captured in Paradise and Magalia Reservoirs and treated and used for domestic use by Paradise Irrigation District. The remainder travels more than 10 miles through the low-density developments on Honey Run Road before entering Butte Creek above the Honey Run Covered Bridge Park. The foothills of Butte Creek are dominated by pristine [oak and pine woodlands and grasslands](#) used almost exclusively for grazing land.

The City of Chico drains only a few areas toward Butte Creek but almost all ends up in Little Chico Creek or Comanche Creek. However, the City Council is proposing a massive urban intrusion into the Butte Creek Watershed, larger than any other development ever planned in Butte County. A 1,448 acre piece of this pristine foothill oak woodland, grassland, numerous drainages, and the rare [Mima Mounds](#) could become home to over 6,000 new residents of Chico. The plan is not designed to provide affordable housing for Chicanos, instead designed to attract wealthy retirees to despoil our foothills. 2,777 homes are planned, 90% of which would be considered high-end, large lot, single family homes serviced by over 40 acres of new paved roads. Around 25% of the entire project footprint would be impermeable, roads, houses, sidewalks, driveways, patios, pools, all greatly increasing the urban runoff of the project.

Urban runoff is deadly to salmon and steelhead. The more urbanized a watershed, the less likely they can survive the repeated assaults of polluted runoff. Chico Creek is a perfect example of allowing development to destroy the salmon run. Heroic efforts by our partners, CalTrout, may offer hope for Chico Creek but no salmon have been seen in years.

The proposed Valley's Edge mega-subdivision will, unfortunately, drain directly into Butte Creek via the Little Chico Creek flood control bypass which borders the western edge of the development. Mitigation in the form of retention ponds is planned, but unlike a reservoir such as Magalia, retention ponds fill quickly in heavy rain storms and ultimately runoff into the creek. The myriad of pollutants is ever growing. Pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, pool chemicals, asphalt and concrete residues, and animal wastes from thousands of cats and dogs and other pets will all end up in Butte Creek. But perhaps the worst of the runoff issues is cars, delivery trucks, construction equipment, and yard maintenance equipment. Gasoline and diesel powered vehicles all leak oil, fuel, radiator fluids, brake fluids, power steering fluids and more. Perhaps the worst of these vehicle related substances is the release of brake dust, made up of iron, copper, titanium and magnesium, and the slow but steady shredding of rubber tires, all of which ends up in the creek. These two concerns come from both gasoline and diesel vehicles as well as electric vehicles. There's no getting away from it.

There are so many other creative options to provide for the housing needs of Chico: redevelopment, infill, upfill, residential industrial areas (like Europe). This assault on the pristine foothills seem to be nothing more than a get rich quick scheme for one developer. The proponent is not a contractor, he is just a developer who bought agricultural land cheap and hopes to convince the City to buy his plan. The Chico City Council seems hell-bent on facilitating this scheme and the citizens of Chico need to put a stop to it!

Get involved, stay involved, write letters to the newspapers, the City Council and get your neighbors fired up. With Smart Growth we can take care of Chico's needs without trying to constantly attract new people to the area. Climate Change is causing the world to rethink development priorities. We need to start here at home, Our Hometown of Chico.