

Yreka Creek  
Greenway  
INTERPRETIVE PLAN



# Table of Contents

## INTRODUCTION

Why Does The Greenway Need Interpretation? .....	1
--	---

## PLAN BACKGROUND

About This Plan .....	3
What Is The Yreka Creek Committee? .....	4
The Role of Interpretation Along the Greenway .....	5
Greenway-Wide Interpretive Goals .....	6

## INTERPRETING YREKA CREEK GREENWAY

Overview Of Greenway Interpretive Reaches 1-4 .....	7
Overview Of Greenway Interpretive Reaches 5-8 .....	8
Figure 3 - Yreka Creek Greenway Interpretive Reaches .....	9
Figure 4 - Trails and facilities in Northern portion of Greenway Planning Area .....	10
Figure 5 - Trails and facilities in Central portion of Greenway Planning Area .....	11
Figure 6 - Trails and facilities in South portion of Greenway Planning Area .....	12

## CREATING SUCCESSFUL INTERPRETATION

Bringing the Community Into The Process .....	13
Using Technology to Attract and Inform Community and Trail Users .....	14
Five Elements of Interpretive Writing .....	18
Brainstorming the “So What?” Factor .....	19
Interpretive Panel Themes .....	21
Suggested Interpretive Panel Concepts .....	23
Other Interpretive Formats .....	25
Ongoing Maintenance is Crucial .....	26
Guidelines for Effective Interpretive Displays .....	26
Figure 1 - ADA visibility example .....	26
Figure 2 - Example of clustered panels.....	26







## *Why Does The Greenway Need Interpretation?*

**P**eople's connections to culture, land, nature and community have become detached. In our rapidly evolving technological world, the sight of people walking down the street talking on the phone or sitting in a restaurant 'surfing the web' on a mobile device is no longer novel. People are busy, speeding down the road without a thought to the natural beauty that surrounds them. We forget, or never learn, the stories that define the places we live in or visit. Place-based interpretation seeks to tell the story of places or to



reveal connections between social and natural systems distinctive to each site. It is an approach based on the belief that people can benefit from understanding the stories of the places they visit.

**T**he interpretive mission of the Yreka Creek Greenway is to provide visitors with opportunities to discover, understand, and appreciate the significance of the greenway and the watershed it belongs to, and to foster a sense of stewardship. Interpretation will allow visitors to develop both intellectual and emotional connections with the natural, cultural, and historic stories of the site through self-directed, guided, and interactive experiences.



## About This Plan

This 2016 update of the Yreka Greenway Interpretive Plan draws from concepts in the 1991 plan written by Lee Roger Anderson. Most of the text here comes from the recent 2015 interpretive analysis by the award-winning Erica Fielder, and the enduring dedication and guidance of the Yreka Creek Committee.



# What Is The Yreka Creek Committee?

The committee is a citizens organization that has been working to restore the Creek for over twenty years, with goals of enhanced fish habitats, educational and interpretive opportunities, and recreation utilization.

Much has been accomplished to date, due primarily to the vision and enthusiasm of the Yreka Creek Committee. The committee coordinates, and participates in, activities essential to the health of Yreka Creek and the support of its indigenous plants, wildlife, and birds. They promote community involvement to clean up refuse, perform trail maintenance, and remove invasive non-native plants. They provided oversight in the creation of brochures displayed in local businesses to invite residents and visitors to enjoy the existing Greenway enhancements. They create community awareness of the importance of the Greenway through presentations to schools and civic organizations.



The Committee is responsible for commissioning the creation of the Greenway logo and the continuity of the project branding. They also determined the segmentation and theming for this Interpretive Plan.



# The Role of Interpretation Along the Greenway

“Interpretation is crucial to the safety and long life of the Greenway once restoration is complete. Interpretation can take the form of wayside panels, sculptures, bridge styles as they express different historical periods, brochures, tiles of flora and fauna embedded in pavement or benches, historic artifact installations, and more. Such materials set a theme for a site so visitors can better understand the value of a place and how it ties into the rest of a town or habitat. It also draws in families, cyclists, school groups, joggers, bird watchers and history buffs who use the site and help maintain a healthy community presence.

In other words, interpretation, in concert with restoration work, will generate a sense of place. Steady pedestrian use in a place increases public safety and helps to reduce maintenance issues.

Interpretation also promotes stewardship. When done right, the art and text on a panel, for example, not only provide information, they also touch memory, feelings, the sensory, and personal experience. This kind of communication is meant to inspire people to fall in love with a place and care for it over time.”

-Erica Fielder



## Greenway-Wide Interpretive Goals

A community/visitor awareness and working knowledge of:

- ◎ Watershed/water quality effects & opportunities that people have every day, through their personal influence upon human population, consumption, pollution, impervious surfaces and watershed recharge.
- ◎ Biodiversity - Local Native Terrestrial/Aquatic habitats and life, especially key indicator species such as native plants, anadromous fish, songbirds and mammals, and their practical conservation opportunities.
- ◎ The Yreka Creek watershed's cultural legacy, including its first culture of Shasta people and their neighbor Tribes.
- ◎ Ongoing conservation of local watershed/wetlands refugia and ecosystem health.
- ◎ Identification of key local Cause and Effect relationships past and present between nature and people by way of human population's expansions, consumptions and behaviors that either destroy or support healthy, sustainable watershed and wetland habitats.

# Overview Of Greenway Interpretive Reaches 1-4

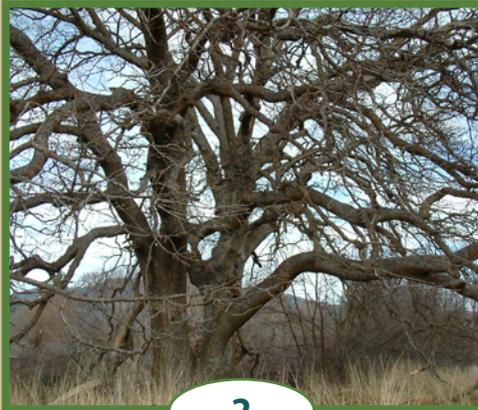
The Greenway was divided into sections and named based on the distinctive characteristics and overarching qualities of each interpretive reach.

**W**ild Reach - The most northerly section of the Greenway, it has minimal commercial or residential development and many viewing opportunities for wildlife and wildflowers.



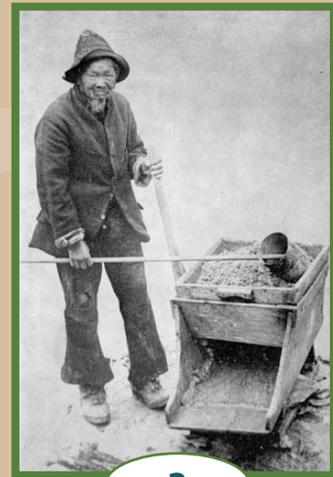
1

**T**he Oak Reach - Situated between Hwy 3/Montague Road and East Lennox Street, this section boasts a pair of very large and old oak trees that inspire both historic and biodiversity interpretive alternatives.



2

**H**istoric Reach - Located in the area of the central Yreka freeway interchange, this portion will focus on early Native American reliance on the watershed and the impacts of the gold rush.



3

**R**ailroad Reach - On the east side of Interstate 5 north of Oberlin Road, this area lends itself to a Rails To Trails type project. Interpretive focus could examine the importance of this shortline to the local history and economy in the transition from gold to cattle.



4

# Overview Of Greenway Interpretive Reaches 5-8

**O**berlin Reach -

**G**reenhorn Reach - An area full of opportunity to improve aquatic health and steelhead/salmon habitat, up to, through, and above Greenhorn Reservoir.

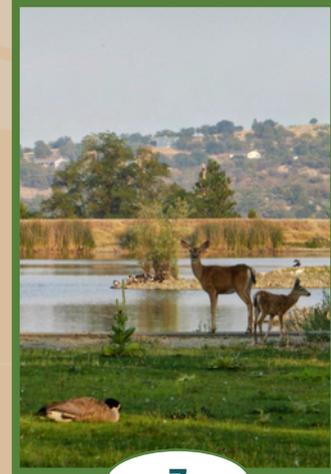


5

**B**eaver Reach - South of the fairgrounds to Oberlin Road, Yreka Creek snakes through this tree-lined section. Signs of beaver activity are abundant.



6



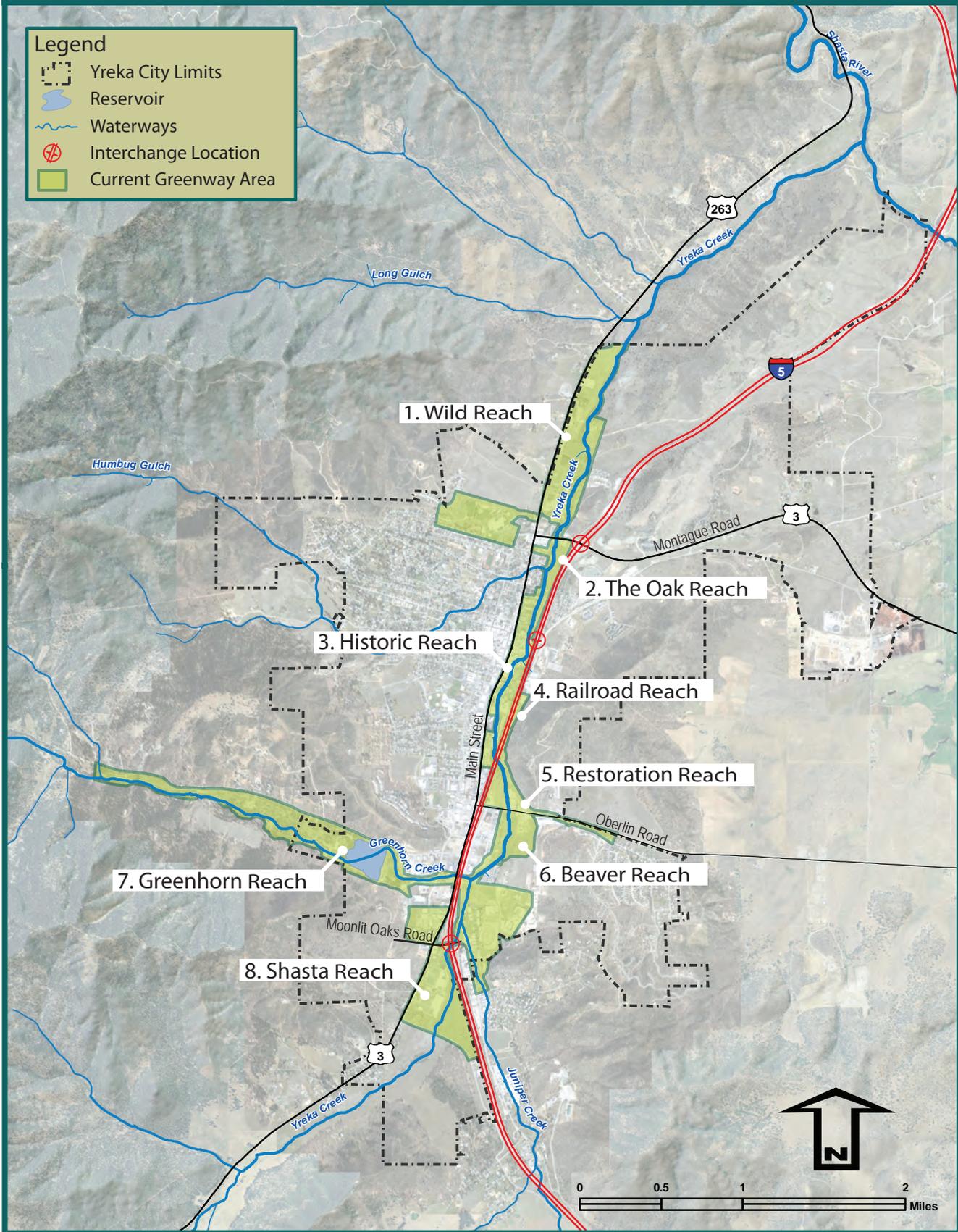
7



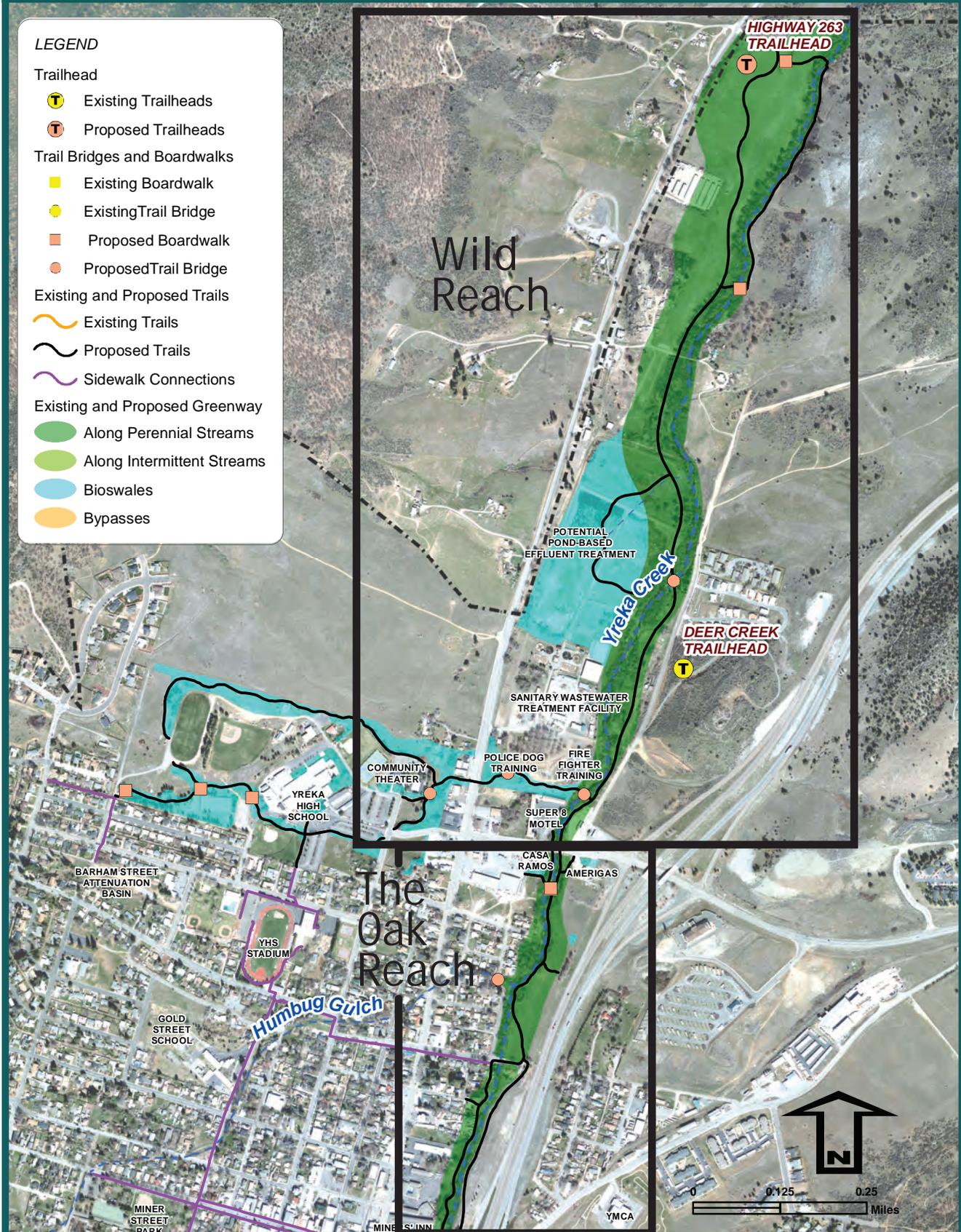
8

**S**hasta Reach - Native people of the Shasta tribe used this area for its water and aquatic resources along nearby Yreka and Juniper Creeks. Dramatic views of Mt. Shasta are available in the southern parts of this reach.

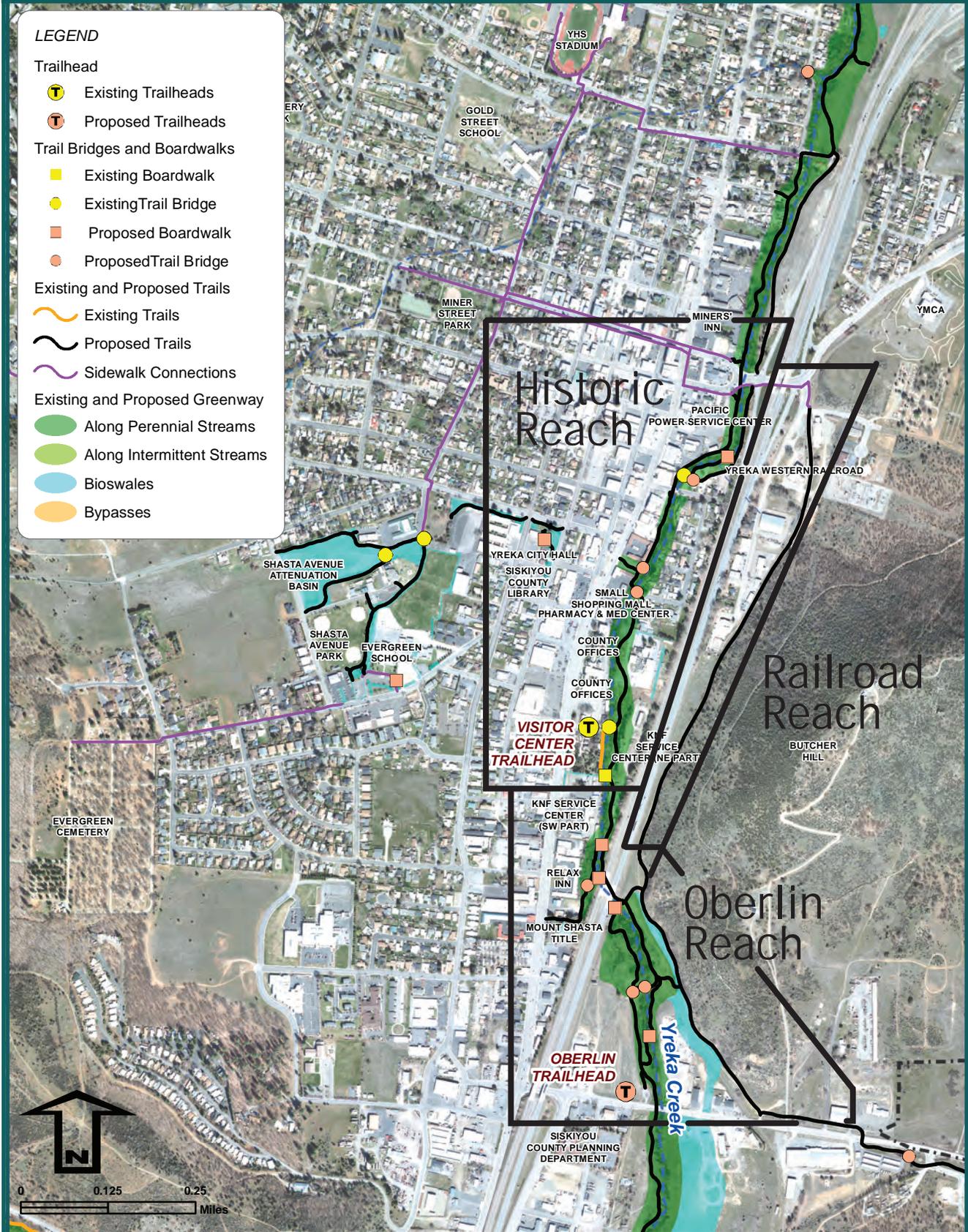
# Figure 3 - Yreka Creek Greenway Interpretive Reaches



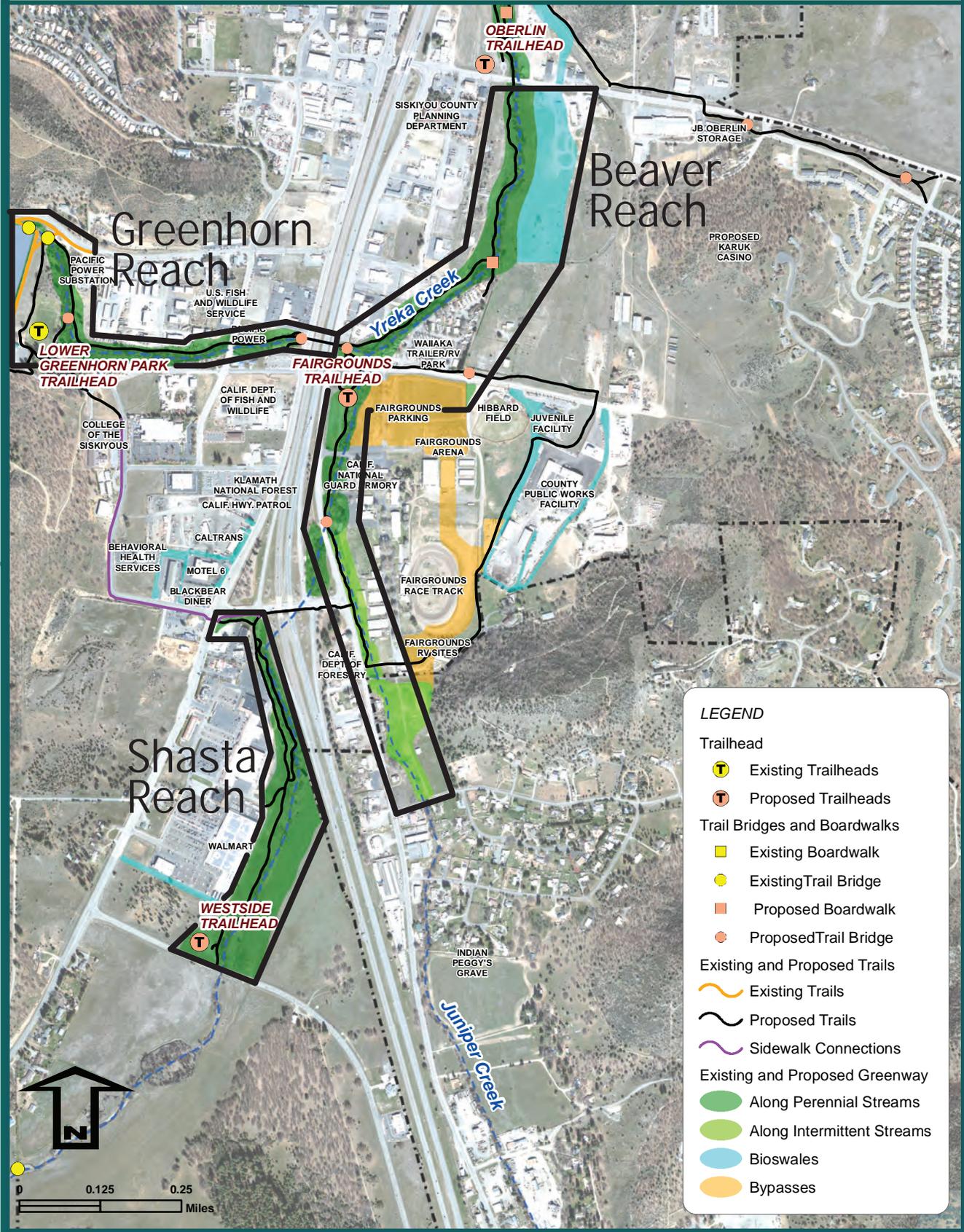
# Figure 4 - Trails and facilities in North portion of Greenway Planning Area



# Figure 5 - Trails and facilities in Central portion of Greenway Planning Area



# Figure 6 - Trails and facilities in South portion of Greenway Planning Area





Durable artifacts and small sculptures guide visitors to points of education along Greenway trails and through town.

## Bringing the Community Into The Process

Suggested citywide interpretive activities to enrich themes and bring the public into the process:

- ⦿ Add to the town's oral history collection and air short bits of original voice on local radio.
- ⦿ Design an exhibit, with specific guidelines, for which locals bring in an historic family photo or small artifact and a short family history to accompany it. Designate volunteers to help individuals shape their offerings for consistency. Exhibit the histories in the buildings along Miner Street for a month. Plan activities around the histories.
- ⦿ Commission people to paint more murals on the backs of boxy buildings, possibly using students or other community groups for "fill-in" painting. Then create a mural walk with maps and brochures.
- ⦿ Hold a design contest for a beautiful, durable installation that can be marked to show flood levels over time.



# Using Technology to Attract and Inform Community and Trail Users



*Example of a QR code*

QR code (abbreviated from Quick Response Code) is a barcode optical label that contains information about the item to which it is attached. It can be displayed at selected locations or on printed media and link to a page on a website. It can be read by a Smartphone, Tablet, Android, or BlackBerry that has a QR code reading application installed on the device.



*Geocachers looking for treasure*

Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting game using GPS-enabled devices. Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location. Treasure contained in the geocache could include such things as Greenway logo lapel pins or discount coupons from local businesses. Geocaching would increase Greenway exposure to travelers passing through the area.



*Downtown Salt Lake City offers free walking tours*

Recorded walking tours could be downloaded from the Greenway website to MP3 players, iPhones, or other devices. This could be accompanied by downloadable maps indicating the locations associated with the recorded material.

# How To Write Great Interpretive Text

## **Memorable Text Stimulates Your Mind as Well as Your Heart**

Erica Fielder Studio, copyright 2011

Interpretive text writing for wayside trail panels and visitor centers has become a specialized skill during its one hundred year history. The best text inspires emotional and intellectual connections between your personal interests and the meanings inherent in the natural or cultural feature you are looking at.

Here are some tips I use when I write the text for my interpretive panels. My aim is to help you, as viewer, recognize something of yourself in the text so you can place the meaning in the context of your life.

To begin, I pick a single focus such a particular old tree at a park. Then I ask myself these questions:

1. Does the text describe the theme as part of a larger story? Does it include expanse of time and space, how the site is being modified today, what we can expect in the future?
2. Does the writing evoke a sense of place? Does it help you create an appreciation or attachment to this site? Are there cultural and spiritual values I can weave into this theme that will enhance your understanding? Can this theme be presented as part of human history?
3. Does the text help you make connections? Does it include analogies, similes and metaphors that relate to your personal experiences and help you understand the theme's deeper meaning?
5. Does the text engage you on the emotional level? Most people tend to forget facts. However, when you simultaneously experience feeling, you are more likely to remember facts and their meaning over time.

While working on the interpretive text, I must remember to keep it brief because the average viewer spends 43 seconds in front of a wayside panel. Here is the final text my talented text writer, Maraya Cornell, wrote about the old tree at Cache Creek Regional Park.

## Granary Tree, Still in Service

*A dead tree is...a meal, a home, and a safety deposit box.*

*All around Cache Creek Regional Park, you'll see dead and dying trees full of holes – like that old pine behind you. Why don't we cut them down? Because they're still in service.*

*Acorn Woodpeckers turn an old tree into a family larder. They drill holes in the softened wood and tuck an acorn into each one. A single "granary tree" can hold thousands of acorns.*

*Dead and dying trees are used by many creatures and are crucial for maintaining a healthy ecosystem.*

*If you see one Acorn Woodpecker...there are sure to be others. These sociable birds live in family groups of up to a dozen or more, all of them helping to defend their acorn cache against thieves.*

### Granary Tree, Still in Service

A dead tree is...a meal, a home, and a safety deposit box.

Relates to something familiar to us and vital to our own survival.

All around Cache Creek Regional Park, you'll see dead and dying trees full of holes – like that old pine behind you. Why don't we cut them down? Because they're still in service.

Helps you identify your place in relationship to your environment.

Acorn Woodpeckers turn an old tree into a family larder. They drill holes in the softened wood and tuck an acorn into each one. A single "granary tree" can hold thousands of acorns.

Alludes to something in our lives that's useful even though it's old.

Dead and dying trees are used by many creatures and are crucial for maintaining a healthy ecosystem.

You might have one too!

If you see one Acorn Woodpecker...there are sure to be others. These sociable birds live in family groups of up to a dozen or more, all of them helping to defend their acorn cache against thieves.

A segment of a familiar line we often say, "If you see one squirrel, you've seen them all." for example.



# Five Elements of Interpretive Writing

The best interpretation is lively, dynamic and imaginative. It conveys information in the form of story and uses metaphor whenever possible. Interpretation can be conversational. It provokes thought, does not always answer all the questions, and inspires curiosity to seek out more information.

1. Interpretive writing relates to something Tangible. This tangible can be an artifact or a resource. For fun, let's use a Beer Bottle as an example.
2. The artifact or resource is associated with its intangible attributes. What are its meaningful qualities (based on individual experience)? It becomes litter. It implies sports, or couch potatoes, or barbeque.
3. The meaningful qualities of the artifact or resource must be associated with a universal concept (love, hunger, war, death, birth, charity). Beer makes you sexy, rich and happy. People love or hate beer.
4. Interpretive writing must create an opportunity for the reader to form an intellectual and emotional connection with the resource or artifact. For example, how beer is made provides insights into the lives of brewers and their fate.
5. Interpretive writing helps move the reader towards higher-level concepts, such as resource protection, stewardship, and regional / global issues. Save our breweries, breweries around the world are becoming extinct, etc.

**R**emember to sprinkle your ultimate theme text with stewardship messages and questions for viewers to ponder. Make sure you aim some of your panels at children and young people. Interpretive text should be at an 8th grade level (average reading level of an American adult).

# Brainstorming the “So What?” Factor

If you can nail down your desired outcomes and come up with some good So What factors, it becomes much easier to choose themes, because you’ll have reasons to pick one over the other.

## Part 1 - Brainstorming

- ⦿ Briefly review who your audience is.
- ⦿ Brainstorm overall desired outcomes for whole project.
  - What do we want visitors to KNOW?
  - What do we want visitors to FEEL?
  - What do we want visitors to DO?
- ⦿ Keep notes on a whiteboard or on big notepads on easels so that you can come back to it all later.
- ⦿ Brainstorm desired outcomes for each panel AND the So What factor.
  - For each panel,
    - What do we want visitors to KNOW?
    - What do we want visitors to FEEL?
    - What do we want visitors to DO?
    - So What? Why should any tourist (or local) care? How can you relate this topic to something they’ve heard, seen, smelled, experienced? How might this topic relate to their outdoor experience, or their health and fitness? Or their experience on the trail?

## Part 2 - Prioritizing

- ⦿ Remind everybody who your audience is.
- ⦿ Prioritize overall desired outcomes for whole project. (This is easier to do after you’ve done one round on outcomes for each panel.) Pick the top 3 for each category of KNOW, FEEL, and DO.
- ⦿ Prioritize desired outcomes for each project.
- ⦿ Pick the top 1 outcome for each category of KNOW, FEEL, and DO (whether by vote, consensus or assigning the final say to someone).

Remember to write for the audience,  
not for yourself or your agency.

We want to inspire kids and families, teens, gang members, dog lovers and others to become knowledgeable, to care about the Greenway, and to help protect it. Avoid using any jargon. Keep text at about an 8th grade level. Avoid words longer than two syllables, if possible. Keep text short. An interpretive panel is not a book on a stick, but rather a point of inspiration and the beginning of more research.

# Interpretive Panel Themes

Please note that site themes and panel concepts are repeated in several locations throughout the Greenway.

## **A. Theme One: Hydrology**

1. Creek's place in the Greater Klamath Watershed
  - a. Where does this water come from, where does it go?
  - b. What is Creek's relationship to the watershed?
2. Creek Hydrology and flooding
  - a. Description of the creek's hydrology
  - b. Description of restoration to improve creek hydrology
  - c. Important role of floods in the ecosystem
  - d. Local flood stories and flood history
3. Activities that affect Yreka Creek hydrology
  - a. Urbanization, agriculture, dams and mining
  - b. What is a healthy creek?
  - c. Channelization issues
  - d. Role and effectiveness of dams: human and beaver

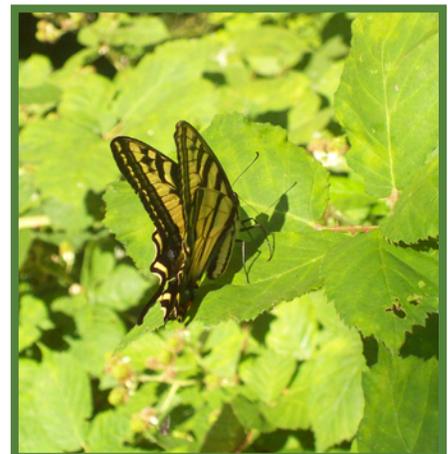
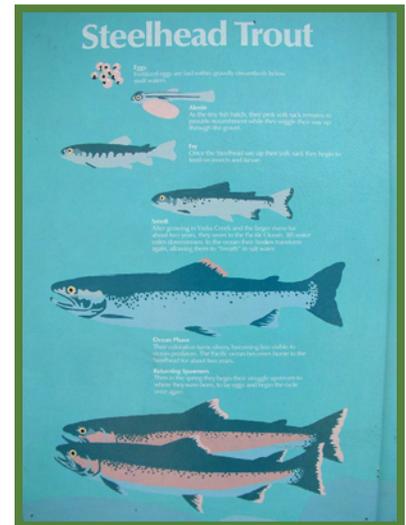
## **B. Theme Two: Histories**

1. Natural History
  - a. Fish, riparian habitat, and wildlife: how well they thrive in unrestored vs. restored habitat
  - b. Reintroduced native plant diversity / plant identification
  - c. Bird identification/increased habitat due to restoration
  - d. Fish and creek health
  - e. The geological story of gold
  - f. Geology of Mt. Shasta and surrounds
  - g. Beavers and their dams

## B. Theme Two: Histories (continued)

### 2. Human History

- a. Native American presence
- b. Local mining stories and oral histories
- c. How mining changed the landscape
- d. Historic buildings of Miner Street with panels both on and inside the buildings
- e. The archaeology of Miner Street architecture: Where did that material come from? How did it get here?
- f. Historic people associated with Miner Street Buildings
- g. Sewage treatment / natural nutrient flow in ecosystems
- h. China Town history
- i. Yreka's water supply
- j. Fishing in the reservoir
- k. Transportation corridors: railroad, I-5, pathways
- l. Downtown Revitalization



# Suggested Interpretive Panel Concepts

## 1. Hydrology

- a. Yreka Creek's (YC) place in the Greater Klamath Watershed
  - i. Where does this water come from, where does it go?
  - ii. What is Creek's relationship to the watershed?
  - iii. What does a healthy creek look like?
- b. Creek Hydrology and Flooding
  - i. Compare before and after improvement
  - ii. What is a flood plain and why should they be protected?
  - iii. What was accomplished?
  - iv. Critical role of flooding in a natural environment
  - v. How to build a town that is in sync with flooding and other natural systems
  - vi. Local flood stories and history
  - vii. Aquifer replenishment and water purification
- c. Activities that affect YC hydrology
  - i. Urbanization, agriculture, dams, mining, road building
  - ii. Channelization issues
  - iii. Dams created by humans and beavers—compare
- d. Engineering follies on YC.
- e. Examples of good and poor creek management

## 2. Natural History

- a. Fish, riparian habitat, wildlife and how well they thrive in restored and unre-stored habitat
- b. Native plants, introduction, plant ID

- c. Non-native species: where in the world do they come from?
- d. Bird habitat and bird ID
- e. Who lives in the creek?
- f. What insects depend on a healthy creek?
- g. Fish ID
- h. Fish and creek health
- i. Beavers and their dams, life histories
- j. Beavers and their relation to salmon--gravels
- k. Beavers and how they naturally slow flood waters
- l. Beavers and how they create habitat for other species
- m. Geological story of gold
- n. Geology of Mt. Shasta and Klamath Knot
- o. Schist along the creek
- p. ID of Greenway Logo: what fish and plant species are depicted?
- q. Seasons: what to look for at different times of the year: ephemeral ponds and wildlife
- r. The senses: what to experience at different times of the year?
- s. The importance of thickets—get people used to what looks messy
- t. Giant Oregon White Oaks
- u. How to determine an oak's age from its size (ask Erica)
- v. Who needs an oak tree? Illustrate plants and animals
- w. What's an oak gall?
- x. Drought tolerant native shrub ID for neighbors to expand habitat by planting in their gardens
- y. Fish passage on Greenhorn Creek at dam
- z. Turtles
- aa. Importance of snags and fallen, rotting trees.
- bb. soils

### 3. Human history

- a. Native American presence as indicated by a story of creation, story of coyote, story of salmon, etc., rather than which tribe owns which piece of land.
- b. Place names and how they came to be
- c. How to tell clay soil from mining activity: tailings
- d. Local mining stories and oral histories
- e. How mining changed the landscape
  - i. Dredging, panning, hard rock, hydrology
- f. Sewage treatment plant, who passed gas? Animal or machine?
- g. Chinese were here
- h. Miners were here
- i. Native Americans were here (be very sensitive about actual locations)
- j. Indian Peggy's Grave: Who was she?



## *Other Interpretive Formats*

In addition to panels, interpretive formats include:

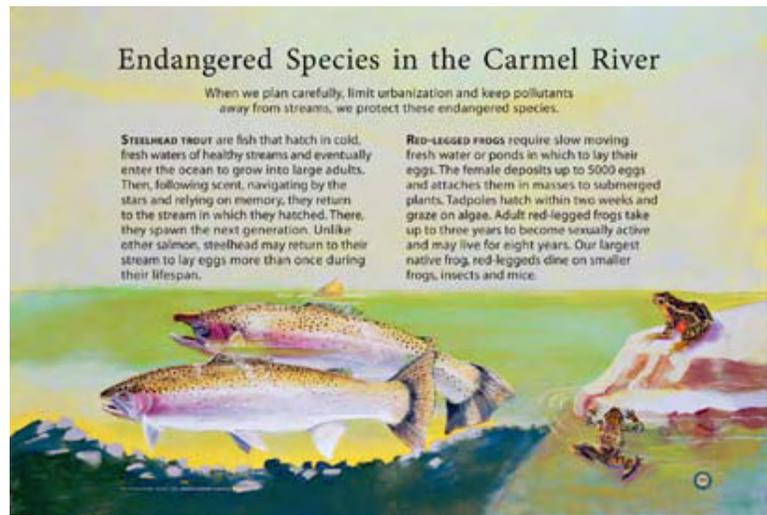
Expressing themes through historic artifacts, such as ore carts and other mining equipment, sited strategically along the path in the parks.

Carefully chosen sculptures as effective interpretive pieces. For example, the stone blocks from the old classroom interpretive area, placed at specific elevations along the greenway, can be etched to document the height of particular floods. Blocks also double as seating along a path.

# Guidelines for Effective Interpretive Displays

Design is the final link between the visitor and information. Designs for interpretive signs should take into account the following:

- Colors and images that attract target visitors.
- Key words in headings and sub-headings that catch the visitor's attention and generate interest.
- Type sizes and styles that ensure easy readability.
- Height and angle that ensure comfortable head movement.
- Reading level that avoids exceeding the visitor's limitations.



This represents a panel that measures 24" x 36". Note text size in relationship to image. Keep in mind that text must be large to accommodate the sight impaired. Artwork must be bold and photos crisp and clear.

To avoid overloading visitors with information and cluttering the landscape, signs and installations should be clustered and limited to 3-6 per reach. Miner Street is an exception: history panels should be posted on and/or in all key buildings along with a conspicuous introduction panel and map of the historic area.



Park looks less cluttered when panels are clustered.

## Ongoing Maintenance is Crucial

The Yreka Creek Greenway will only succeed over time as a tourist attraction and community asset if there exists a deep commitment to fund maintenance to protect the Yreka Creek Greenway and its natural, historical and educational elements.