***WINTER 2021-22 Vegetation Survey Highlights***

***(Compiled from field notes 01.03 & 05.22 by Jim Marsh)***

***GENERAL NOTES:***

Heavy rainfall (~5” in one 24h period) from a single storm in early November has brought on an early explosion of spring-like growth this fall and early winter. This is certainly obvious in archived photos of the annual grasses for example. Closer inspection during this systematic Daubenmire count turned up other interesting though partially anecdotal observations. Wild Radish has quickly bolted to flower and germinants carpet the ground in many areas already. Filaree got a jump start up on the levee top areas where it is common. Milk Thistle which seemed relatively sparse after the last several dry winters is also reappearing in areas where it was absent or limited in extent over the last few drier years. Evidence that the seed bank still held plenty of reserves and reinforcing the notion that a single one-time/100% removal of a species is inadequate to sustain control (See: The Bradley Method).

Since much of the actual bankside is either very difficult or impossible to access from the floodplain I have always been compelled to rely on estimates for the first quadrats in these locations. These estimates are always based only on what I can see from a partially obscured vantage point. This has been consistently noted on the raw data sheets but given the diversity that can be seen even from these compromised spots closer inspection from the water’s edge would likely reveal more species and definitely yield greater accuracy for those quadrats.

***RE: TRANSECTS 0-7 completed 01.03.22***

***TRANSECT 0:*** Levee maintenance crews recently trimmed up the three oaks on the levee here letting much more light into the floodplain/bankside vegetation. They also spent some considerable time and man-power removing at least one mature tree (maple sp.?) from the water’s edge ~150m downstream.

***~MID-WAY BETWEEN TRANSECTS 1 & 2:*** Since I began making my visits here there has always been a large patch of Miner’s Lettuce that reveals itself every late winter/early spring immediately on the upstream side of the south UOP footbridge abutment. It has expanded to ~10m x 10m and this year is nearly ready to bloom at this time. It always escapes the Daubenmire counts since it is well off any transect. I’ve not noticed the species anywhere else on The 3 Acres.

***RE: TRANSECTS 8-10 completed 01.05.22***

***TRANSECT 8:*** It appears the several vetch specie common to the area have gotten a strong, early start this year as well. No blooms yet but it won’t be long. There’s always a lot along this transect particularly up on the levee itself mixed in with the annual grasses.

***TRANSECT 9:*** In this neighborhood there’s frequently a considerable scattering of areas of low, mossy growth here and there in the shade of the wild rose canes and dense standing dry remains of last summer’s gumplant that could benefit from a real botanist having a good look. I’ll have to find one!

I’ll be interested to see if both Fiddleneck and Star Thistle make a come back this year. Both seemed increasingly rarer over this last extended dry spell than in the years prior. Both species were common in this part of the site in the past.

***RE: HOMELESS/TRANSIENT CAMPS & TRASH:***

Evidence of relatively short-term human habitation (limited clearly to one or two individuals) during the drier months continues to appear particularly in the willows between T4-T6 and on the relatively well-concealed bankside “ledge” between T7-T8. Consequently other than the typical, small litter items common to urban landscapes there was less trash encountered on the site overall during these two recent visits. Some of this is, of course, obscured by the rapid growth but credit must also go here to the efforts of UOP Security Officers and The Delta Neighborhood Watch Group both of which groups are aggressively monitoring sites all along the Calaveras, Smith Canal and other nearby Delta locations where human campsites have become large blighted dumps.