

North Davis Upland Habitat Area restoration project breaks ground



Community members, The Friends of North Davis Ponds members and elected officials attended Thursday's groundbreaking for the North Davis Upland Habitat Area. Adrienne Heinig/Courtesy photo

By Special to The Enterprise

About 50 community members, including many members of The Friends of North Davis Ponds, and elected officials attended the July 18 groundbreaking for a habitat restoration project on three acres of city-owned land at F Street and Anderson Road.

Davis Councilmember Lucas Frerichs, who sits on the board of the Yolo Basin Foundation and directs state policy at The Nature Conservancy, offered opening remarks praising staff and community advocates for their work shepherding this

habitat restoration project — called the North Davis Upland Habitat Area — through the approvals process. He also remembered the late mayor Julie Partansky, who advocated for open-space concerns and for which the adjacent wildlife area is named.

Environmental activist Jean Jackman, who co-founded the Friends of the North Davis Ponds, recalled how she protested various proposed uses on the site, including housing. Jackman noted that the area was home to over 200 species of birds and over 30 reptiles. She remarked that being in nature can have a healing impact.

Davis Poet Laureate James Lee Jobe closed the groundbreaking with a poem about belonging and event participants spread wildflower seeds on the site.

Also in attendance were Supervisor Jim Provenza, Mayor Pro Tem Gloria Partida, Davis City Councilmembers Will Arnold and Dan Carson, City Manager Mike Webb, Tracie Reynolds, manager of the city's Open Space Program, and Carrie Shaw, vice-chair of the Davis Open Space and Habitat Commission.

The North Davis Upland Habitat Area will feature native plantings (i.e., new trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers), accessible walking gravel paths, natural seating areas, pond overlook areas and interpretive panels.

Over the winter, the entire site will be blanketed with native grasses and wildflowers (also known as “forbs”). At this time, the city will also be installing a half-mile of new trails that will be fully ADA accessible. The city also will be planting a 900-foot hedgerow and about a quarter-acre of drainage swales, all with locally sourced native plants. Rocks of varying heights also will be placed so that visitors can sit down and take a rest along the trail.

The site will be open to the public during the spring of 2020, although habitat restoration will not be complete at that time. During the winter of 2020, the city will plant about 50 new native trees and about 750 native shrubs to round out the restoration.

The three-year, \$250,000 project is a collaboration between the city, the Open Space and Habitat Commission and the Friends of North Davis Ponds. It also stems from community feedback the city received during a public outreach effort in 2016. The community expressed an interest in seeing more habitat restoration projects done within the city limits using money from the city's open space protection parcel tax, which generates about \$700,000 a year for the acquisition and maintenance of the city's open space areas (which do not include parks and greenbelts). The parcel tax is funding two-thirds of the project cost.