

**California Native Plant Society – San Luis Obispo Chapter Community Award
presented to Atascadero Land Preservation Society on January 11, 2020**

Award presented by Susi Bernstein (CNPS Education Committee Co-Chair) and accepted by Mike Orvis and John Goers (ALPS President and Vice President, respectively)

S. Bernstein's Speech:

On behalf of our Chapter's Board of Directors, I'm honored to present the Community Award tonight. This award highlights the significant contribution that has been made by an entity, outside of CNPS, to promote native plants or the natural environment in our local community. Examples of a significant contribution might include an outstanding record of protecting native plants and habitats, or inspiring people, including students, to appreciate native plants. The recipient of tonight's Community Award has caught our attention for a long time now by doing excellent work in both of these areas.

We'd like to recognize all the important work that the Atascadero Land Preservation Society has accomplished over the years. Here is a great example of what a committed group of volunteers can do together. These volunteers are determined to preserve the very part of Atascadero that makes their city such an appealing place to visit and live: the beautiful native trees and undeveloped open space. Since 1989, ALPS, as this group is called, has been successful in purchasing and preserving important parcels of land in the City, planting natives to enhance disturbed portions of the properties, and sharing the land with the public. In addition, ALPS makes a concerted effort to incorporate an educational component for the public on the properties they acquire.

I'll highlight a couple of the ALPS Preserves to illustrate why we felt it was important to honor this organization.

The most recently acquired ALPS property is the 103-acre Three Bridges Oak Preserve. At Three Bridges, you can walk on trails that lead you through sycamore riparian woodland along Atascadero Creek, passing slopes of blue oak and coast live oak woodlands, and then through chaparral on the summit where you are treated to a terrific view of Atascadero, complete with a sign labeling the landmarks down below. Some of my favorite reasons to visit this trail include the presence of woolly blue curls and pitcher sage, the ability to walk right by mature madrones, and the incredible display of Chinese houses we saw last spring. This is the place where I had my first known encounter with hound's tongue (*Cyannoglossum grande*), so nicely identified along the trail with its very own sign. The signage along this trail is excellent, as is the ALPS website. Among other things, the website has copies of the interpretive signs, a link to the biological report written for the project, and a photo collection of some of the more showy plant species organized by color. The importance of this public preserve and the need for natural open space in our lives is demonstrated by the parking lot, which always seems to be full.

Another property of ALPS is Stadium Lane, a purchase made in 2003 which connects Atascadero Creek to the entrance of the historic Stadium Park. Mardi Nilis and I recently visited this area, and paid tribute to our old friend Bill Shepard by walking the garden named for him, which he designed to promote the garden use of California natives. It's a nice way to get a sense of which native plants appeal to you, and which grow well in Atascadero. There's an interpretive sign with information about growing natives, and the

ALPS website has a species list of all the numbered specimens in the garden. The parking lot at Stadium Lane was full here too, people and their dogs clearly glad to have a place to walk in nature.

The Adobe Springs Reserve is another five-acre parcel, acquired by ALPS in 2008. The land supports a natural artesian spring, water bubbling right out of the ground. A red willow thicket grows in this area, and also includes Fremont cottonwood and creek dogwood. My introduction to Adobe Springs occurred two years ago when CNPS was invited to participate in an annual program that ALPS conducts for local third graders. The kids walk the site, rotating through different educational stations; at the CNPS station, we had a matching activity to learn the nearby plants using photocopies of their stems and leaves, and we'll participate in this event again on April 7. The importance of land preservation and access to local open space is again made clear to us as these kids have the chance to learn about the natural resources and the historical significance of the Springs, in the field, in person.

To complement the Adobe Springs Interpretive Program, ALPS has led the development of a third-grade curriculum for the Atascadero Unified School District. The curriculum covers the human history associated with the Springs, but there are also lessons about plant parts and their importance for cultural use and wildlife, as well as lessons introducing kids to plants and animals present at the Reserve.

ALPS has also promoted the appreciation of plants through their yearly college scholarship, awarded to students interested in environmental science or conservation.

There's so much more to say about ALPS...

I haven't even gotten to the additional parcels ALPS owns on the East side of the City protecting riparian vegetation along Atascadero Creek. Or the planting efforts that ALPS conducts on properties outside of its own preserves. Or the Atascadero Native Tree Committee, which is also part of ALPS and has a long history of providing outreach and education about Atascadero's native trees.

It's a lot to be proud of, and we're happy to recognize ALPS for all the hard work that's been done to protect native plants and habitat in Atascadero.