



**Three Bridges Oak Preserve looking southeast**

## **Location and Acquisition**

The Three Bridges Oak Preserve (TBOP) is a 103 acre undeveloped parcel of native vegetation representative of both the mountains and interior valleys of California's central coast. It is located approximately two miles west of the city center of Atascadero, California and is bordered on the north by Atascadero Creek and on the south by chaparral and oak woodland. The Preserve contains predominately native vegetation representing riparian, oak savannah, chaparral, and coastal mountain ecologies. The Atascadero Land Preservation Society, ALPS, owns the parcel and has partnered with the City of Atascadero to develop both a trailhead and a multi-use trail system open to the public.

During the 1990's, the property was offered for sale by the Davis family and was championed by ALPS to be purchased as open space land for habitat preservation and passive public recreation. With help from the Trust for Public Land working as a liaison with the landowner, ALPS received major funding from a California River Parkways Grant along with funds from the California Department of Transportation and purchased the land in 2012. Realizing the need to open the land for public recreation, ALPS obtained funding in 2013 from a River Parkways grant to establish a trailhead, construct a multiuse trail system, and provide cultural and natural resource informational signage. Other partners include the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the US Forest Service, the County of San Luis Obispo, owners of the adjacent Eagle Ranch, and several local land use advocacy groups. Once completed, this project will provide a beautiful natural area for day use, protect natural resources, and promote public health.

The trail system and trailhead are currently being constructed. ALPS is spearheading the trail construction while the City of Atascadero is developing the trailhead as a capital project. Anticipated opening of the Preserve to the public is Spring 2017. The Preserve is not open to public access at this time.



**Preserve Aerial Looking West**

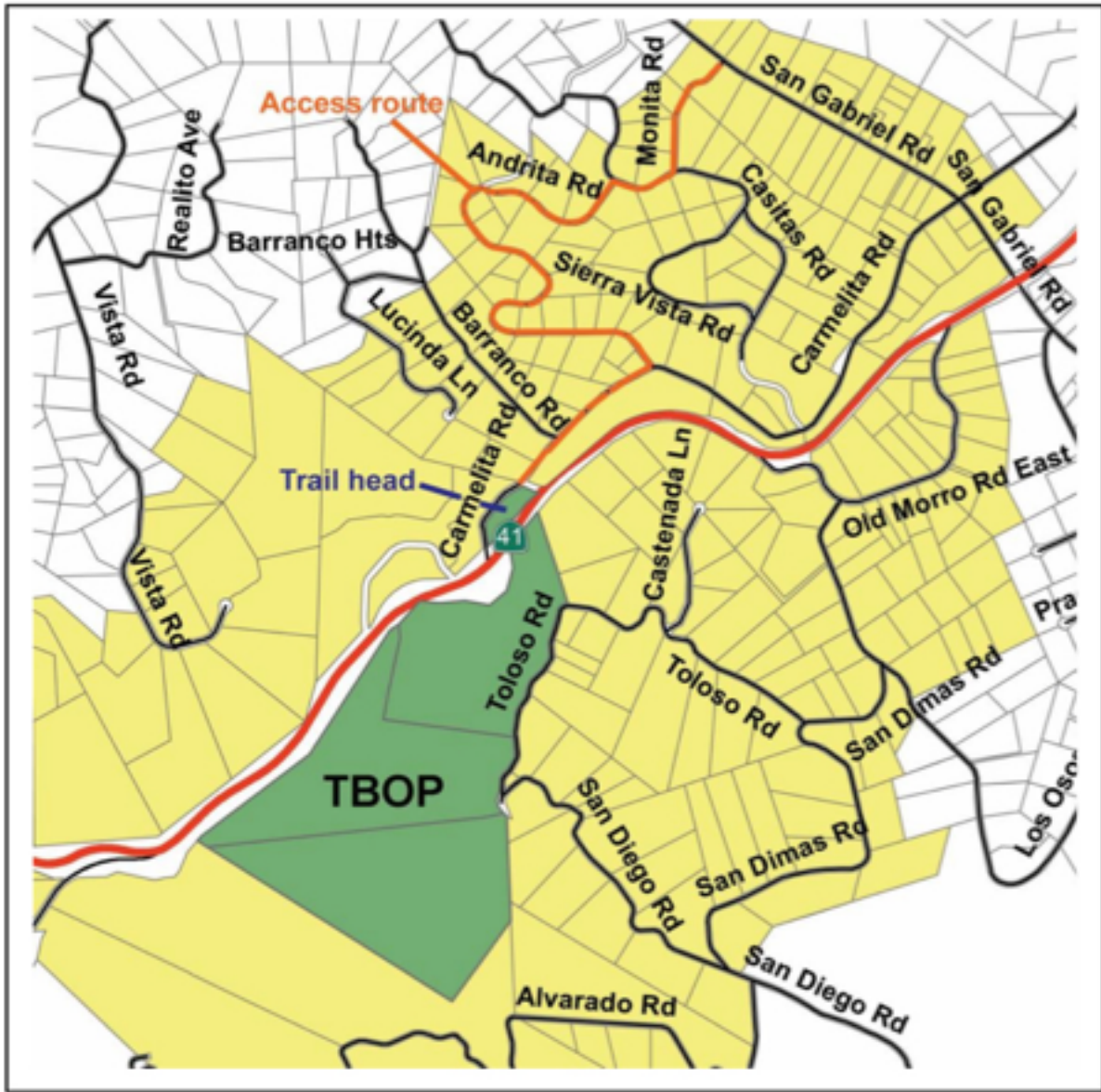
### **Trailhead and Trail System**

*The trail system is under construction and is not open for hiking at this time.*

### **Trailhead**

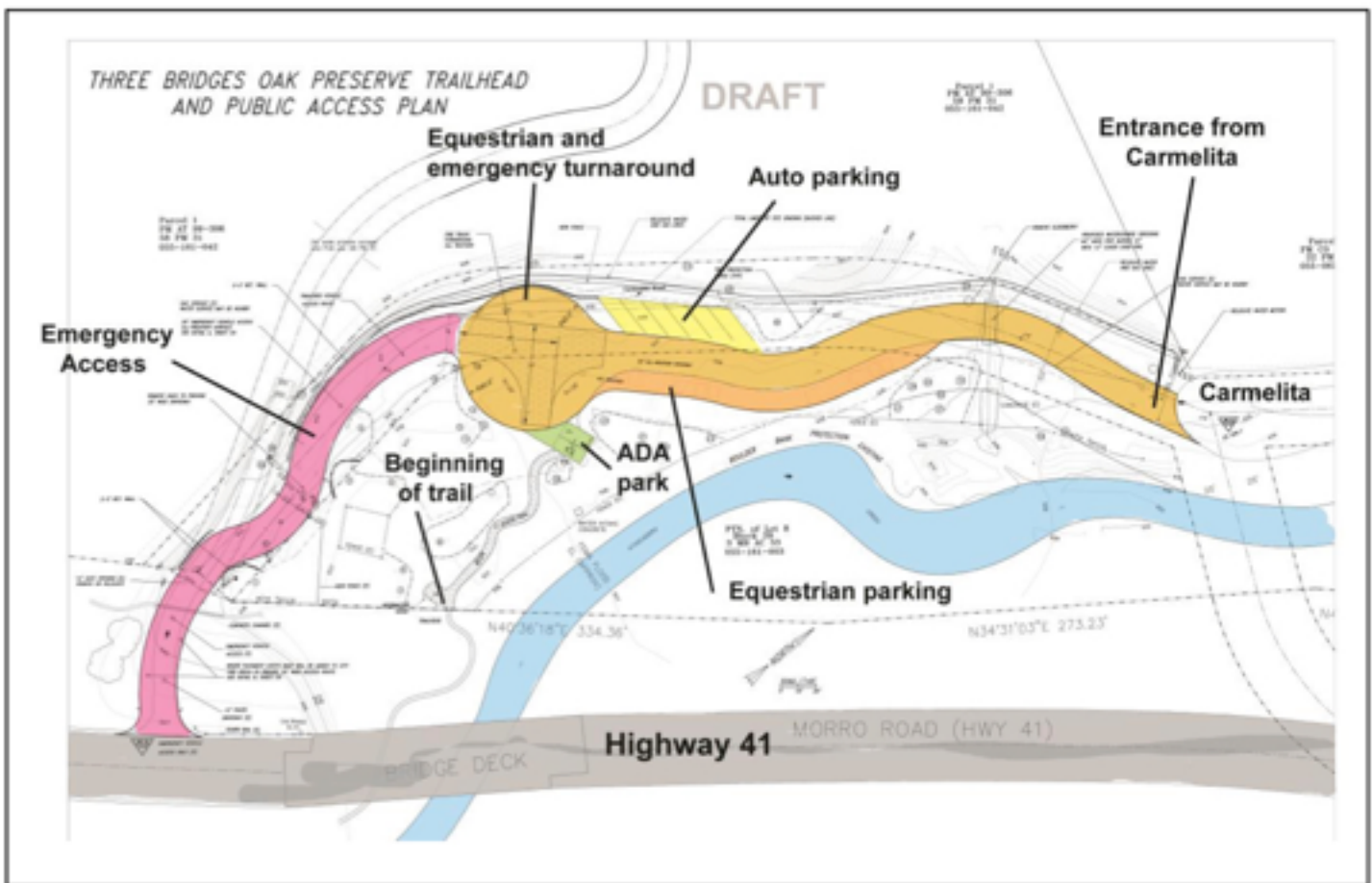
The Preserve is approximately two miles west of Atascadero along Highway 41. Access to the Preserve will not be directly from a trailhead along Highway 41, rather via a trailhead off of Carmelita Avenue at the north end of the property. The Preserve will be open seasonally, typically April through October during periods of no or low flow of Atascadero Creek. The trailhead will have a gated entry and offer parking for automobiles and equestrian trailers, an informational kiosk, trash receptacles. While the trails will not be ADA accessible there will be one ADA parking pad. No bathroom facilities will be available, and no RV parking or tent camping allowed.

In addition to providing parking for the Preserve, the trailhead will incorporate access for emergency vehicles from Highway 41 (Emergency Access). This access will be reserved for emergency use only and blocked by a locked gate: Preserve visitors will not have use of this access.



### **Trailhead location at Three Bridges Oak Preserve (TBOP)**

Entry onto the Preserve will be through a gated fence on the SE side of the trailhead (Beginning of trail). A kiosk at the trail start will present safety information, rules, and interpretive information. All users will then cross under Highway 41, continue along a short path to Atascadero Creek, cross the creek bed, and enter onto the Preserve and its trail system.



### **Carmelita Multiuse Trail Plan**

#### **Trail System**

The three-mile trail system consists of both multiuse (hikers, equestrians, bicyclists) and hiker-only sections. The system begins at the 940' elevation trailhead on the Meadow Trail across Atascadero Creek and up to the Oak Savannah Loop Trail. These two trails together create a loop trail (up and back) approximately two miles long in the lower half of the Preserve. The trail takes one through a mixed riparian habitat, a grassland meadow, and up through oak woodland populated by several different species of native California oak trees including blue oak, coastal live oak, and canyon live oak. Located on the eastern-facing slope of the property this loop trail will provide a shaded woodland hike that will be accessible and available for all ages of hikers, including children and seniors. This loop trail will be multi-use and available to hikers, cyclists, and equestrians.

Continuing off the Loop Trail, a 0.25 mile Lookout Trail gains elevation out of the mixed forest into chaparral ending at a scenic overlook at 1250'. The overlook affords views of the City of Atascadero and the rural hillsides that encompass the City Center. The Lookout trail is multiuse, but land and soil conditions beyond this point combine to make a trail suitable for hikers only. Tie ups for horses and bicyclists will be available for those who want to hike up to the top of the Preserve on the Madrone Trail.



### **View NE from the 1250' lookout**

The 0.9 mile Madrone Trail continues past the 1250' vista through mixed flora to the highest elevation on the Preserve. Gaining in elevation, hikers will discover small groves of madrone trees, fairly uncommon within Atascadero city limits. Between the madrones, oaks, and tall ceonothus hikers will often be in the shade, a welcome relief during a summer hike. Toward the top of the trail, hikers will encounter dense stands of manzanita before arriving at the trail end at 1620' elevation. A shaded rocky vista point rewards hikers to sit and enjoy a sweeping view of northern San Luis Obispo County. The up and back distance from the trailhead to the 1620' elevation point is 3.8 miles. A trail connecting the Three Bridges trail system through an Eagle Ranch easement into the Los Padres National Forest is in the planning stages.



## **Three Bridges Oak Preserve Trail System**

### **Documents**

Three Bridges Oak Preserve Management Plan August, 2015

Biological Report for ALPS 3 Bridges Trail October 2014

### **How you can help – Donate and Volunteer**

The Preserve trail system has been only partially funded and an endowment fund is needed for long term maintenance costs. While ALPS is investigating additional funding opportunities in the form of federal, state, and private grants, additional contributions from private and corporate donations are needed. ALPS memberships also contribute to our efforts of opening and maintaining this Preserve for public enjoyment: we encourage you to join ALPS and support your local conservation group. Because ALPS is a completely volunteer organization all donations and membership fees go directly to support construction and maintenance of our preserves. See [www.supportalps.org](http://www.supportalps.org) for membership information and contact ALPS at [info@supportalps.org](mailto:info@supportalps.org) to discuss donations.

ALPS also has monthly volunteer work days posted on our website for all of our properties. For the Three Bridges Oak Preserve a volunteer group meets weekly to build trails. No previous knowledge or tools are needed to participate, only an interest in contributing to the Preserve trail system with a supportive group of people. Contact ALPS at [info@supportalps.org](mailto:info@supportalps.org) for more information on this opportunity.