

## Three Bridges Oak Preserve Public Access and Resource Management Plan

<b>Table of Contents</b>		<b>Page</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Background</b>		
A.	Executive summary	3
B.	Recent History	3
C.	Location	4
<b>Chapter 2. Purpose of Plan</b>		
A.	Plan objectives and Vision	4
B.	Preserve design summary: opportunities and constraints	5
1.	Land use and access	5
a.	Existing land use	
b.	Off-site access	
c.	On-site access and trails	
2.	Resources	6
a.	Biological resources	
b.	Cultural resources	
3.	Hazards	7
a.	Fire	
b.	Floods	
c.	Soil erosion	
i.	Gully erosion	
ii.	Atascadero Creek bank	
iii.	Trail corridor	
<b>Chapter 3. Uses and Improvements</b>		
A.	Uses	
1.	Allowable uses	9
a.	Equestrian	
b.	Hiking	
c.	Bicycling	
d.	Dogs	
2.	Regulated uses	10
a.	Animal grazing	
b.	Group assembly/public gatherings	
c.	Special studies	
d.	Motorized vehicles	
3.	Prohibited uses	10

<b>Table of Contents</b>		<b>Page</b>
<b>Chapter 4. Public Access</b>		
<b>A. Introduction</b>		<b>11</b>
<b>B. Preserve trails</b>		<b>11</b>
1. Trail designation		
2. Trail access		
3. Trail segments		
4. Trail design standards		
<b>C. Trailhead and parking</b>		<b>13</b>
<b>D. Interpretive trail signage</b>		<b>14</b>
<b>E. Meadow Picnic Area</b>		<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter 5. Vegetation Management and Fire Hazard Reduction</b>		
<b>A. Trails</b>		<b>15</b>
<b>B. Perimeter borders</b>		<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter 6. Public Safety</b>		
<b>A. Hours of operation and Seasonal Park status</b>		<b>16</b>
<b>B. Safe trail conditions</b>		<b>16</b>
<b>C. Fire hazard management</b>		<b>17</b>
<b>D. Reduction of conflicts between users</b>		<b>17</b>
<b>E. Signage</b>		<b>17</b>
<b>F. Reporting</b>		<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter 7. Implementation</b>		
<b>A. Vegetation and trail management</b>		<b>18</b>
<b>B. Sign installation and maintenance</b>		<b>18</b>
<b>C. Refuse management</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>D. Parking area maintenance</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>E. Informational materials</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>F. Trail brochure production</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>G. Volunteer coordination for labor</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>H. Tour or school group coordination</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>I. Preserve Administration</b>		<b>20</b>
1. Record keeping (non- fiduciary)		
2. Management Plan review		
<b>Attachments:</b>		
1. Use Agreement		
2. Trail System		
3. Biological Assessment Report		
4. TBOP Trailhead Site Plan		

# **Three Bridges Oak Preserve Public Access and Resource Management Plan**

## **Chapter 1. Background**

### **A. Executive summary**

The Three Bridges Oak Preserve (TBOP) is a 103-acre parcel of native vegetation representative of both the mountain and the interior valleys of California's coastal range. Located on the west side of Atascadero, the land is completely undeveloped and is bordered by Atascadero Creek to the north. The Preserve contains predominately native vegetation representing riparian, oak savannah, chaparral, and coastal mountain ecologies. Project activities include construction of a multiuse trail system, development of a single trailhead, and the installation of an interpretive sign program emphasizing the historical, culture and natural resources of the area.

Major funding to both purchase this parcel and develop a trail system was received through California River Parkways Grants with additional funding by the California Department of Transportation. The Atascadero Land Preservation Society (ALPS) has partnered directly with the City of Atascadero to provide this unique recreational and educational experience to the public. 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 not only provide a beautiful natural area for day use, but will also provide a link to the Los Padres National Forest. Additionally, the project will protect natural resources, ensure water quality, and promote public health through recreational opportunities.

The Three Bridges Oak Preserve Public Access and Management Plan (Management Plan or Plan) is intended as a guidance document for the Preserve Manager (ALPS, its designee or successor) in their stewardship of the property. The Plan describes the vision for the Preserve and presents objectives and methods for providing public access and resource protection of the Preserve.

### **B. Recent history**

The Preserve land has been in private ownership for decades with minimal use, probably due to the steep elevation of the property and areas of dense chaparral. No evidence of buildings has been found on the property. Previous uses of the land were minimal, but cattle grazing did occur. There are no known cultural sites from pre-historical or historical Native Americans.

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.

ALPS has appreciated the commitment of the City of Atascadero to open this land to the public. The City has played an important role by offering the use of adjacent city property to be used as a trailhead. Additionally, City staff has provided guidance for site planning, funded a biological evaluation of the property, and coordinated neighborhood outreach. ALPS and the City will maintain a long-term Use Agreement for the maintenance of the trailhead and responsibilities related to public use of the property (fire hazard, water quality etc.).

### **C. Location**

The Three Bridges Oak Preserve is a 103-acre open space property located approximately two miles west of the city center of Atascadero, County of San Luis Obispo, California. The Preserve is bound to the north and west by Atascadero Creek and adjacent State Highway 41 and to the east and south by City of Atascadero residential properties. Historically, the Preserve has been accessible from many locations along its borders on an informal basis: few or ineffective fence lines separate the property from entry. Presently local neighbors access the property via paths from Toloso and San Diego roads, and from State Highway 41. Further, Atascadero Creek is frequented by local citizens to cool off during hot weather. However, there are no legal access points to the private Preserve until ALPS establishes a trail system, a trailhead, and a parking area and opens the property for public use.

## **Chapter 2. Purpose of the Plan**

### **A. Plan objectives and vision**

The importance of the Three Bridges Oak Preserve lies in the protection of a pristine parcel of California Coast Range environment while providing access opportunities for the public. This Management Plan will help ensure public access to TBOP with minimal disturbance to sensitive natural habitats while protecting unique scenic and natural resources. The Plan also contains provisions for reducing hazards along neighboring properties and outlines steps to be taken to minimize risks such as fire hazards. Recreational opportunities will be limited to passive use of open space areas. The Management Plan is consistent with Atascadero's vision for permanent conservation of open space areas while providing opportunities for passive recreational use by the public. This Plan provides for effective long-term management and maintenance of the Preserve. The Plan will be implemented commensurate with the financial and management resources and obligations of ALPS, or successor in kind.

The Management Plan will be a "dynamic" document with updates and revisions added as necessary. The Plan will remain flexible and adaptable to meet future

challenges. The Preserve Manager will review the plan annually to ensure all provisions are appropriate and current.

This Management Plan shows methods to accomplish the following objectives.

- Summarize the Preserve's natural resources, existing conditions, and constraints
- Describe the overall trail system, interpretive signage, trailhead, and parking
- Describe specific guidelines and standards for public use
- Describe resource management and protection
- Present methods for maintaining amenities of the Preserve
- Guidance for operating and implementing the Plan

In response to the Vision of the Preserve, this Plan aims to accomplish the following objectives.

- Strive for minimum disturbance to the natural qualities of the Preserve while allowing appropriate public access
- Protect sensitive habitats and species in all areas of the Preserve
- Provide a public trail system that allows balanced and strategic access, and provides a linkage to other local trail systems in the community and to the Las Padres National Forest
- Reduce risk and hazards to Preserve users and surrounding neighbor properties, including fire protection, erosion, noise, trespassing, and litter
- Provide guidance on maintenance issues along with the roles and responsibilities of the City of Atascadero and ALPS or their successor

## **B. Preserve design summary: opportunities and constraints**

There are constraints and opportunities related to providing public access to the Preserve while preserving habitat and retaining qualities of existing neighborhoods.

### **1. Land use and access**

#### **a. Existing land use**

The Preserve property has had minimal activities for the past 10-20 years, essentially reverting to a natural habitat. Residential land surrounds a portion of the Preserve, creating planning challenges related to public access (entry sites and parking areas), private property protection, and safety. There are no known utility easements on the Preserve.

TBOP consists of three parcels, two parcels are zoned as recreation and one parcel is zoned as residential. A deed restriction will be added limiting the use of the property to conditions of use laid out in Grant Agreement No. R54005, State of California, The Natural Resources Agency.

## **b. Off-site access**

Presently there are no legal access points to the Preserve property and few or ineffective fence lines separate the property from entry. However, local neighbors have for years informally entered the higher elevation south-east side of the property via paths from Toloso and San Diego Roads. Pedestrian / bicycle trailheads at the higher elevation east side of the property have been identified at the end of each road but neighborhood dissatisfaction with parking impacts and limited emergency vehicle access have focused ALPS to create one multiuse (equestrian, hiking, biking) trailhead distant from these neighborhoods. To this end, the City has offered ALPS the use of a parcel at the lower elevation north side of the Preserve at the western end of Carmelita Road, the "Carmelita Trailhead". This trailhead would provide immediate access to the Preserve.

Highway 41 lies between the proposed trailhead and the Preserve. Historically the public has used a pathway from the proposed trailhead area, under the adjacent Highway 41 bridge, and then across Atascadero Creek onto the Preserve. This route will be used for pedestrian, bicyclist, and equestrian access and would require minimal brush removal while maintaining the native riparian habitat. However, because Atascadero Creek may have significant flow during the rainy season, approximately December through March, crossing the creek can be unsafe during certain periods. Therefore, TBOP will be a "seasonal" park, closed during high flow periods of Atascadero Creek. Finally, while ADA parking will be provided at the TBOP trailhead, the TBOP trail system is not constructed for ADA users.

## **c. On-site access and trails**

A two to three mile trail system is proposed containing one lower-elevation loop connected to an "out-and-back" trail to the highest elevation of the Preserve. These trails provide moderate to vigorous hiking, biking, and equestrian experiences. Adjoining landowners and Forest Service staff will be consulted to provide eventual trail connectivity to the Los Padres National Forest. Final mapping of the Preserve and final layout of the trail system has been accomplished (see Attachment 2). Trail construction will be completed by the California Conservation Corps and volunteers utilizing trail standards adopted by California State Parks.

## **2. Resources**

### **a. Biological resources**

Some habitat areas on the Preserve may pose trail constraints due to the presence of sensitive species. The presence of special status species (e.g. steelhead, amphibians) will need to be considered prior to construction or implementation of trail construction activities in these areas to ensure protection from degradation and human impacts. An evaluation of the biological resources of the Preserve and the impacts of the trail and trailhead construction, along with

human traffic has been completed (see Attachment 3). This report also offers mitigation procedures to ensure protection of native species identified along with minimizing degradation of habitats due to construction and recreational use (Biological Report section 10.2-10.7).

**b. Cultural resources**

No known historic and prehistoric resources are present on the Preserve. However, prehistoric sites related to settlements of the Chumash and Salinan tribes are present elsewhere in the county and historical tribe presence in the Salinas valley is known. The Preserve property also has a history of cattle ranching during the past century.

**3. Hazards**

Hazards present on the Preserve include fire hazards, flooding in the Atascadero Creek corridor, and soil erosion.

**a. Fire**

As with much of California, some fire risk exists of the Preserve. The combination of dried grass, dense chaparral and dead wood accumulation within the native forest is typical of fire hazards inherent in California's Coastal Range environment. The existence of the Highway 41 corridor on the northern border adds an additional risk factor through human interaction. If a fire were to start along the Highway 41 corridor, it would have the potential to spread uphill towards the residential areas on the Preserve's south and east borders.

These conditions are of particular concern for the fire department due to the interface of residential areas with the Preserve and the lack of easy access for fire apparatuses to the interior of the preserve. A corridor into the upper elevations of the Preserve via roads on the Eagle Ranch to the Preserve's upper trail will allow limited emergency entry. Efforts to minimize fire are presented in Chapter section 6C.

**b. Floods**

The Preserve is part of the Atascadero Creek water basin with several gullies draining into the Creek. Flooding beyond the banks may occur during periods of high water flow and would eliminate access to the Preserve from the TBOP trailhead. During periods of high water flow signage will be posted notifying users of the both the trailhead and Preserve closure.

**c. Soil erosion**

Three types of soil erosion may occur on the Preserve: gully erosion, creek bank erosion (especially during heavy storm events), and trail corridor erosion.

*i. Gully erosion*

Insignificant soil erosion has occurred in the gullies due to dense coverage of the land with shrubs, trees, and grasses. These plants stabilize the soil and have resulted in stable channels which dissipate the runoff into localized areas and, ultimately, into the Creek. Design of the trail will include appropriate construction to maintain stable runoff from these gullies.

*ii. Atascadero Creek bank*

The Creek bank adjacent to the Preserve shows a stable configuration with minimal affect due to high water flows. High water rapidly flows to the Salinas River approximately four miles downstream and into a siphoning system which feeds Atascadero Lake, approximately two miles east. It is not anticipated that the trail system will affect the natural flow of water in the creek due to erosion or subsequent accumulation of additional sediment.

Biannual assessments of the creek bank and bed by both ALPS and the Department of Fish and Wildlife will be conducted. If bank erosion or bed alteration is seen from Preserve traffic or naturally occurring high flow, access to the Preserve may be shifted from its present location up or down stream. However, this is not anticipated to be a significant problem, as the trail can easily be repositioned for acceptable crossing of the Creek onto the Preserve. Consultation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife will provide best possible options.

*iii. Trail corridor*

The trails on the Preserve will be constructed according to California State Parks guidelines for multiuse trails. These guidelines emphasize proper trail construction techniques to eliminate potential erosion. These techniques include using minimal trail grades, proper out slope of tread, well compacted native soils and installation of erosion control features during construction. Additional facility policies will be implemented to minimize erosion potential. An example of a policy is no use by equestrians or bicycles for three days after the last rain occurs. That policy alone has proved to decrease erosion by over 50% on local county park trails. These construction techniques and policies provide the best erosion control possible, but annual inspections and correction of problematic sites will be conducted, see also Chapter section 6B.



## **Chapter 3. Uses and Improvements**

Notwithstanding anything in this Plan, as the owner of the property, ALPS has the sole authority to determine the use of the property consistent with its zoning, property acquisition grant requirements, and deed restrictions if any.

The Preserve has a wide variety of natural habitats which limit certain uses and their location. Uses are categorized as Allowable, Regulated, and Prohibited. Allowable Uses are those that are generally allowed on the property, without obtaining permits or authorization. Regulated Uses require permission from the property manager and/or other responsible agencies before taking place. Prohibited uses are those that are not allowed under any circumstance, and include uses normally prohibited by law in public places.

### **A. Uses**

Most of the property lands are open to the public by way of the TBOP trail system. Users will be required to stay on designated trails. Equestrians, hikers, and bicyclists will observe acceptable trail right of way priorities. See Chapter section 6D.

#### **1. Allowable uses**

##### **a. Equestrian**

Equestrians (horse and rider) are to remain on designated trails and staging areas except where prohibited. Cross-terrain or off-trail riding is not allowed. Horses must be under the control of their owners at all times. All users shall observe proper trail etiquette, must clean up after their horses, and must remove manure from staging areas and kick droppings off the trail.

##### **b. Hiking**

Pedestrians are to remain on designated trails and staging areas. Cross-terrain or off-trail hiking is not allowed. All users shall observe proper trail etiquette.

##### **c. Bicycling**

Bicyclists (bicycle and rider) are to remain on designated trails and staging areas except where prohibited. Cross-terrain or off-trail cycling is not allowed. All users shall observe proper trail etiquette.

##### **d. Dogs**

Dogs are to be on leash and under the control of their handler, including equestrian users, at all times and are to remain on the designated trails, trailhead and staging areas both to protect the wildlife and to avoid conflict with other

users. Cross-terrain or off-trail roaming is not allowed. All users shall observe proper trail etiquette, must clean up after their animals and pack out droppings.

## **2. Regulated uses**

This Plan includes allowances for agreements for some special users, including animal grazing, group assembly/public gatherings, and special studies. Any and all of these activities will require permission from the Preserve Manager.

### **a. Animal grazing**

This plan would allow grazing for vegetation management purposes as described in Chapter 5.

### **b. Group assembly/public gatherings**

Gatherings may be allowed by agreement with the Preserve Manager.

### **c. Special studies**

Scientific observation and studies may be conducted by individuals or educational institutions with permission of the Preserve Manager. These studies may not alter the landscape in any way, overly disturb natural resources nor impede normally allowed public access. No harvesting of natural resources on the property may occur, except for restoration purposes. Small plant and geologic samples may be taken for recording purposes. No native animals may be removed from their habitat. Any organization or individual requesting to study a portion of the property must submit an outline of proposed procedures for the study, to be approved by the Preserve Manager. The researcher will share the results of the study with the Preserve Manager.

### **d. Motorized vehicles**

Motorized vehicles operated by the public will be allowed only at designated access and parking areas. Vehicles allowed on the property are limited to emergency vehicles and authorized vehicles only. Other vehicle access will be limited to maintenance and/or restoration activities, construction traffic or grazing operations in the designated areas.

## **3. Prohibited uses**

The following list of uses and activities by the public are prohibited on TBOP. This includes all those uses normally prohibited by law in public places.

- Smoking
- Camping
- Fire in any form
- Motorized Vehicles (all terrain vehicles, motorcycles, etc.)

- Littering
- Firearms, weapons, or animal traps
- Amplified sound
- Pedestrian or animal access into sensitive habitat areas
- Paragliding or hang-gliding
- Remote-controlled model vehicles (e.g. cars, airplanes, helicopters, drones)
- Active sports, such as golf, baseball, etc.
- Planting, cultivating, or harvesting by any member of the public without permission from ALPS
- Paint ball or other combat games
- Placement by the public of signs or banners of any kind, including political campaign signs, fundraising signs, meeting notices, etc.
- Solicitation

## **Chapter 4. Public Access**

### **A. Introduction.**

This plan strives to improve and assure safe public access, while protecting the natural resources of the preserve. Public access and recreation opportunities on the Preserve will generally be passive, and consist mainly of the Preserve's trail system. Trail alignments were designed to avoid impacts on sensitive habitats and resources. Supporting facilities include a parking and trailhead area. Improvements of the preserve are generally limited to trail improvements or habitat restoration activities.

### **B. Preserve Trails**

This section provides a description of each trail on the Preserve, types of users, proposed design treatment, and trail improvements. Access is planned for a variety of users including hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians.

#### **1. Trail Designations**

The trails are designed to accommodate as many users as sustainable design standards will permit. Therefore, some trails may be designated for different users and will be signed accordingly. Trail designations are as follows:

##### **Multi-use**

Hiking, Bicycling and Equestrian users will be allowed on these trails.

##### **Hiking Only**

Hiking will be the only allowed use on these trails.

## **2. Trail Access**

All trails on the Three Bridges Oak Preserve will be accessed from a trailhead located at the west most end of Carmelita Avenue on the north side of State Highway 41 on property owned by the City of Atascadero. A path through the Caltrans right-of-way, passing underneath Bridge No. 49-51 and across Atascadero Creek, will connect the trailhead with the trails on the Three Bridges Oak Preserve.

## **3. Trail Segments**

Following is a description of trail segments and their related improvements. Refer to Attachment 2: Trail System, for the locations of trail segments.

### **Meadow Trail (Hiking, Bicycling, Equestrian use)**

The trail begins in the natural meadow on the south side of Atascadero Creek at about 950 foot elevation. The trail makes a very gradual ascent to the intersection with the Oak Savannah Loop Trail at about 980 foot elevation. The trail is approximately 0.1 miles in length.

### **Oak Savannah Loop Trail (Hiking, Bicycling, Equestrian use)**

The trail begins near the small meadow on the south side of Atascadero Creek at about the 980 foot elevation point and gradually climbs upward on the easternmost slope to the Blue Oak grassy savannah. After descending to cross the central drainage on the property, the trail ascends again to its highest point at about 1175 foot elevation and the intersection with the Lookout Trail. The trail then descends through the dense oak woodlands and back to the trail beginning. This trail is approximately 1.2 miles in length.

### **Lookout Trail (Hiking, Bicycling, Equestrian use)**

This trail begins at the high point of the Oak Savannah Loop Trail at about 1175 foot elevation and ascends into the dense chaparral to a lookout area located at about the 1250 foot elevation point. This area is the high point for bicycle and equestrian travel. In the future, this area will be the starting point for a connector trail to the Eagle Ranch western trail corridor and the Los Padres National Forest. This trail is approximately 0.2 miles in length.

### **Madrone Trail (Hiking only)**

This trail begins at the lookout area located at about the 1250 foot elevation point and continues ascending through the chaparral to a rocky vista surrounded by a small Madrone grove. This is the highest point in the trail system at an elevation of about 1620 feet. The trail is approximately 0.9 miles in length.

#### **4. Trail Design Standards**

The trail design standards applied to the trail design and construction are those used by the California State Park System. The trail system is designed and will be constructed to be sustainable and therefore have the following attributes.

- The trail system will not adversely affect natural resources. Any impact considered “take” is avoided, and in areas considered “sensitive,” impacts are mitigated through planning and environmental review.
- The trail system will not disrupt or alter the natural hydraulic flow patterns of the landform. Sheet-flow runoff is not diverted or accumulated, and runoff is allowed to continue on its normal flow path. Drainages, including micro-drainages, are not captured, diverted, or coupled with other drainages by the trail. Water does not accumulate on the trail and does not drain onto the landform where natural drainages do not exist.
- The trail system will be designed to withstand the impacts of the intended user and the natural elements while receiving only routine cyclic maintenance.
- The trail system will withstand the impact of 25 to 100 year storm events. The trail tread and structures are minimally affected by these events. This includes impact above or below the trail alignment that is not attributed to the alignment. These types of impact are anticipated and avoided through good planning and design.
- The trail system will meet the needs of the intended user group or groups. A high level of satisfaction results in users staying on the designated trail alignment and not creating unauthorized or volunteer trails. User satisfaction also results in the continued use of the trail.

#### **C. Trailhead and Parking**

This section provides a description of the trailhead and parking layout located on the City owned property located on the North side of State Highway 41 at the west most end of Carmelita Avenue. The trailhead provides the access point to the trails located on the Three Bridges Oak Preserve. The trailhead and parking plan was designed in conjunction with the City of Atascadero to ensure it meets City requirements for accessibility and public safety. Refer to Attachment 4: TBOP Trailhead Site Plan.

Public access to the trailhead will be from the east via the western-most section of Carmelita Avenue through a 20 foot wide gate. Emergency vehicle only access to the trailhead will be provided from the west via State Highway 41 through a locked 20 foot wide gate. Emergency services will utilize their KNOX-BOX key system for access through the gate.

The trailhead will accommodate parking for six-eight (6-8) single vehicle spaces, three (3) equestrian vehicle/trailer spaces and one (1) ADA accessible space. The

trailhead roadway will be 20 feet wide and will run from the public access point at Carmelita Road to the emergency vehicle only access at State Highway 41. The watercourse crossing will be a 60 inch culvert designed to carry the roadway. A circular roadway will be provided to facilitate traffic flow and to support an emergency vehicle turnaround.

An informational kiosk will provide trailhead and trails information, a list of user rules, and provide interpretive information about the preserve. Other signage will be provided to educate users about the trailhead layout and the proper use of the trailhead (permitted and not permitted parking areas, directional signage, ADA accessibility, Keep Clear - Fire Lane, etc.).

Fencing will be installed at the trailhead public access point, the emergency vehicle access point, the trail access point near the kiosk, and along perimeter areas as needed.

#### **D. Interpretive and Trail Signage**

This section provides a description of the interpretive and trail signage to be installed at various locations on the preserve and at the trailhead. Interpretive signage offers visitors educational opportunities that inspire an appreciation of the natural resources and motivate visitors to protect those resources. This signage can also offer a historical perspective of the land by highlighting previous use by Native Americans and early California development. Interpretive signage will be installed at the following locations.

- One three panel informational and interpretive kiosk located at the trailhead near the trail access point.
- One three panel informational and interpretive kiosk located in the natural meadow on the south side of the Atascadero Creek.
- Three interpretive trail-side pedestals at strategic trail junctions and/or trail locations.

Trail identification signage will be installed at the following locations:

- The beginning of the Meadow Trail.
- The intersection of the Meadow and Oak Savannah Loop Trail.
- The intersection of the Oak Savannah Loop Trail and the Lookout Trail.
- The intersection of the Lookout Trail and the Madrone Trail.

#### **E. Meadow Picnic Area**

This section provides a description of the picnic area located in the natural meadow adjacent to Atascadero Creek. This resting and picnic area will offer visitors an unobstructed view of the Atascadero Creek and its surrounding riparian ecosystem. The picnic area will be approximately 8 x 20 feet of compacted dirt/decomposed granite with one or two picnic tables. The picnic area will be adjacent to the three panel informational and interpretive kiosk.

## **Chapter 5. Vegetation Management and Fire Hazard Reduction**

Existing vegetation on the preserve is dominated by native trees and plants present in three distinct plant communities: riparian zones, oak woodland/grass savannahs and California native chaparral. The current condition of all three communities can be described as healthy, clean and natural without an over-abundance of non-native, invasive plants present or unnatural erosion occurring.

The goal of the vegetation management will be to maintain the current health of the plant communities while providing fire protection for public safety both within the preserve and along its trail system, and along the perimeter boundaries. Impacts to vegetation will be minimal especially after initial trail construction is complete. Vegetation management activities will include trail side brush and grass clearing and fire hazard reduction through weed abatement and ladder fuel reduction along the occupied borders. See additional fire hazard management in Chapter section 6C.

### **A. Trails**

TBOP's trails can be broadly categorized to cross into two areas: blue oak/grassy savannahs and native chaparral. Along the grass savannah areas, annual trail maintenance will include clearing of any overhanging grass and light brush along all of our trails within the preserve. In the lower elevation chaparral areas, initial trail construction will include clearing brush from a broad corridor 10-12' wide. The higher elevation chaparral areas may have less brush removed during construction in order to protect madrone trees and other favored plants present in the upper reaches of the property. Thus, the trail construction will in essence create a fuel-break effect which will prove valuable as an anchor point to local firefighters for any future fire-fighting efforts in that area. ALPS will take steps towards promoting this fuel-break effect by coordinating with local fire agencies and using the site for training purposes. Annual trail assessment and necessary brush removal will maintain a more fuel-lean trail environment.

### **B. Perimeter borders**

Following the City's guidelines, ALPS will conduct annual weed abatement activities along the Preserve's borders occupied by residences. Additionally, ALPS will decrease any "ladder fuels" along those same borders. "Ladder Fuels" refers to brush and low-hanging tree branches that could allow a grass fire to climb into the tree canopy. ALPS will conduct additional fire reduction activities as outlined in Chapter 6. ALPS has met and will continue to meet with the City's Fire Marshall to address any future fire hazard concerns that may arise.

## **Chapter 6 Public Safety**

Although use of ALPS' property is at the users' risk, one of the purposes of this Plan is to improve user safety while using the trail system. The following sections address safety concerns and management.

## **A. Hours of operation and Seasonal Park status**

The Preserve will be limited in its availability for public use. The Preserve will have a “seasonal park” status as part of its operating program. This “seasonal park” status allows access only when the Atascadero Creek flow conditions allow for safe usage. Hours of public access will be from sunrise to sunset during the designated safe season opening. During seasonal closures gates will be closed barring access of vehicles to the Carmelita trailhead.

Access to TBOP will be from the city-owned trailhead on Carmelita Avenue, known as the “TBOP Trailhead”. Accessing TBOP from the TBOP Trailhead will require crossing Atascadero Creek which is typically a dry creek for much of the year. TBOP will open to public access only when passing across Atascadero Creek is safe. It is anticipated that typical open months each year will be April through November.

## **B. Safe trail conditions**

To facilitate user safety, trails will be monitored and maintained throughout the year. Annual inspection reports will be conducted in the spring of each year with a plan of action to address any trail maintenance issues determined by the report, see Chapter section 7A. Any extreme hazardous condition will be remedied immediately or the trail will be closed until such time that the work can take place to mitigate the hazard. In addition to the annual inspection, trails will be inspected following any major storm event, i.e. major rain storms, strong wind events, etc. Trail maintenance standards will adhere to guidelines as specified in the California State Park’s Trail Handbook. Work will be accomplished by a combination of volunteer trail maintenance workers and contracted projects with the California Conservation Corps. ALPS maintains budgetary line items in each year’s budget providing funding and support for the maintenance of our trails.

## **C. Fire Hazard Management**

As outlined in Chapter 5, ALPS will conduct annual weed abatement activities in accordance with City guidelines. Additional fire hazard mitigation efforts will include:

- prohibiting smoking within the preserve
- weed abatement and brush removal around high use areas such as the TBOP Trailhead and the benches and kiosk in the creek side meadow
- working with Caltrans to increase brush removal along the Highway 41 corridor
- periodic grazing using sheep or goats in select areas
- posting signage advocating fire awareness
- in coordination with Atascadero Fire Department and Cal Fire, creation of a fuel break along the perimeter of the Preserve



## D. Reduction of conflicts between trail users

Occasionally, conflict among users has happened on trails. Signage will be posted at TBOP explaining right of way priorities to all users. The universal trail usage “triangle” will be used posted showing hikers have right of way over bikers and equestrian riders having right of way over both the other groups. Additionally, safety signs will be posted explaining the proper way to pass equestrian riders on the trail, see example below.



## E. Signage

Signage will be posted at the main trailhead kiosk stating the importance and responsibility of all users to protect and maintain the preserve from misuse. Additionally, Information related to operation of the preserve (open hours, litter and trash removal, animal handling, trail etiquette, neighboring private property courtesy etc.) will be posted at the main kiosk.

## F. Reporting

ALPS will post procedures for users to report any misuse of the preserve resources or unapproved activities within the preserve. Policy violations (e.g. dogs off leash) will be reported to ALPS but civil code infractions (e.g. illegal camping) will be reported to the City of Atascadero Police Department.

## Chapter 7. Implementation

Preserve administration will be implemented commensurate with the financial and management resources and obligations of ALPS, or successor in kind and be consistent with the Use Agreement (Attachment 1

## **A. Vegetation and trail management**

Vegetation management will include tasks according to Chapter 5 and Chapter section 6B. To ensure consistency in management, the committee will create appropriate logs which will include work performed, dates, maps, the parties that performed the work, and associated costs etc., see Chapter section 7.I.1.

Trail maintenance is necessary to keep trails in good condition, improve safety, and enhance the user's experience, see Chapter sections 5A and 6B. Informal trail inspections and observations by trail users, ALPS Board Members, volunteers, and maintenance crews can help to identify needed improvements. ALPS will maintain a website link at [www.supportalps.org](http://www.supportalps.org), for ease of reporting trail conditions through mail or e-mail. Trail repairs will be addressed promptly. Repairs may be contingent upon the priority of the problem and availability of labor and financial resources. If the Preserve Manager determines that a trail maintenance/repair problem is a safety issue, that portion of the trail system will be closed temporarily until the problem is remedied. A Trail Log will be developed, and include a trail map to identify the segment that needs improvement, a check-list of the type of improvement needed, the repair party, and the date completed see Chapter section 7.I.1.

## **B. Sign installation and maintenance**

The sign program will include sign design and content, installation schedules, and maintenance. Durability and security are important considerations when choosing materials for the signs. ALPS will endeavor to follow the recent examples used on the City's Atascadero Creek Trail, for consistency and durability. Signs will be located to minimize sun damage where possible. Signs should be maintained to ensure readability and scheduled for replacement if weathering or vandalism occurs.

As required in the Resources Agency grant agreement, a temporary sign has been installed that identifies the area and acknowledges the sources of funding. Other signs to be maintained by ALPS include the following:

- Welcome to ALPS Three Bridges Oak Preserve
- Trailhead signs including vehicle directional signage
- Trail safety signs regarding yielding amongst user groups, plant and animal cautions, and fire hazard awareness signs
- Educational signs
- Waste management signs: Pack it in/Pack it out, dog and horse feces management
- Closure signs posted and removed
- Wayfinding signs on city roads to Preserve trailhead
- Signs indicating private driveways near entrance to ALPS trailhead
- ADA signage

### **C. Refuse management**

Trash removal is important for public safety and aesthetics. ALPS will post signage to encourage citizen responsibility for trash while ALPS members, trail users, and volunteers will monitor the staging area and Preserve for trash. Trash receptacles will be provided at the trailhead and trash removal by the Preserve Manager will take place on a scheduled or as needed basis.

### **D. Parking area maintenance**

Upkeep of the TBOP trailhead will require annual weed abatement, parking area surface maintenance, fence maintenance, kiosk upkeep, and signage oversight. ALPS will work in partnership with the City on these and other tasks in accordance with the responsibilities laid out in the Use Agreement.

### **E. Informational materials**

The public will be informed of the diverse natural resources and history of the property. Information will be developed for public outreach and include descriptions of the Preserve's ecosystem, history of the local area, and Preserve map. This information should be available electronically on the ALPS website and as a brochure at the trailhead.

### **F. Trail brochure production**

Visitors to the Three Bridges Oak Preserve will be informed about vegetation management efforts, appropriate trail usage, trail etiquette, instructions for parking, hours and seasons of operation. Maps indicating trail alignment, roadways, and points of interest can help orient trail users. Brochures should be available at the trailhead and on the ALPS web site for visitors to print themselves.

### **G. Volunteer coordination for labor**

The Preserve Manager may rely on other non-profit organizations and volunteers as a source of information and labor. All volunteers should be familiarized with, and trained for trail maintenance and proper safe tools use and practices. Vegetation identification and management techniques should be explained and made available to volunteers helping with the vegetation management effort. Sources of volunteers include ALPS membership, California Conservation Corp. (CCC), Atascadero High School (AHS) Earth Club and Leadership Club, and Atascadero Horsemen's Club. Interested parties will be directed to the ALPS web site for published work days.

### **H. Tour or school group coordination**

Occasionally, groups may want to tour the Three Bridges Oak Preserve. There will be a point person to coordinate scheduling of group visits, and a docent to meet the group, introduce ALPS, give a brief overview of both cultural and natural history, and to lead a hike.

## **I. Preserve Administration**

Preserve administration will be implemented commensurate with the financial and management resources and obligations of ALPS, or successor in kind and be consistent with the Use Agreement (Attachment 1).

Successful implementation of the Management Plan depends upon having clear understanding of areas of responsibility as well as close coordination between the City of Atascadero and the ALPS. Following is an outline of responsibilities that City and ALPS or its successor needs to address in the ongoing administration of the Plan. Many responsibilities overlap so it is likely that some crossover will occur. Good communication and a clear understanding of the task will prevent duplication of efforts and will ensure that delegation has occurred for that effort.

A central location will be established for Preserve management operations records, so that information is readily accessible to the management team. The following is a list of typical administrative duties that will be required in the administration of this Plan and management of the Preserve.

- Financial accounting, budgeting, records
- Grant writing and administration
- Volunteer/Docent coordination/training
- Agency coordination
- Maintenance crews coordination
- Permit program administration
- Record keeping (non-fiduciary)
- Public outreach
- Restoration crew coordination
- Construction/improvements coordination

### **1. Record Keeping (Non-Fiduciary)**

Good record-keeping techniques are essential to an organized program. Many of the tasks encompassed in this implementation Plan include recommendations for records of actions needed and completed. It is recommended that logs are created to record items such as daily activities, hazards found and action taken, maintenance needed and performed, etc. Records should also include surveys of the conditions of vegetation and restoration areas to provide accurate monitoring data. Keeping such records is important to:

- Monitor necessary improvements and changing conditions
- Assist with planning and programming of resources (financial and human)
- Document achievements (especially helpful as an information source for permitting and grant applications)

There are common features recommended for each log/record for the different improvements and operations. Features common to most records are:

- Project-specific binder or log that has been preprinted with multiple columns
- Instructions for reporting/logging method (cover sheet), standardized
- Language appropriate to the task
- Date of work completed
- Name of person(s) who did the work
- Description of other actions taken, if any
- Photocopies of maps appropriate to the Project
- Notice of potential work to be done (if needed, and a date when it was observed)
- Expenditure of monies (if any), source of funds

## **2. Management Plan review**

The Management Plan has been designed to be flexible to accommodate future challenges and changes. The Management Plan will be reviewed periodically to accommodate future changes.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- 1. Use Agreement**
- 2. Trail System**
- 3. Biological Assessment Report**
- 4. TBOP Trailhead Site Plan**