Native Tree Mapping and Inventory Project
Final Report Presentation

(The Atascadero General Plan identified the need for a GIS based inventory of Atascadero's woodlands and sensitive habitats. The completion of the Native Tree Mapping and Inventory project implements this General Plan program.)

DISCUSSION:

Background: Atascadero’s native oak forest is one the community’s most valuable resources. Goal LOC 7 of the General Plan identifies preservation of the tree covered hills of Atascadero as a priority. The General Plan identifies the native forest as the “distinctive scenic quality of the community.” In order to help manage and protect this valuable and fragile resource, program 7.1.2. identified the need for a GIS based inventory of Atascadero’s woodlands and sensitive habitats. The completion of the Native Tree Mapping and Inventory project implements this General Plan program.

2002 General Plan (page II-31)

Goal LOC 7. Tree-covered hills shall be preserved to retain the distinctive scenic quality of the community.

Policy 7.1: Ensure that the native trees of Atascadero are protected from new development in order to retain the natural character of the community.

Programs:

1. Enforce all provisions of the Atascadero Native Tree Ordinance as a high priority.

2. Maintain a current Geographic Information System (GIS) based inventory map of all native woodlands, plant communities, sensitive habitats, connective habitat and wildlife corridors. Require lot line adjustments, subdivision maps, and development permits to minimize impacts on mapped resources that are identified as sensitive, and provide mitigation as requirement by the Native Tree Ordinance.

Responsibility: Community Development Department / Environmental Consultant

In late 2004 the City of Atascadero contracted with East-West Forestry Associates to proceed with a "Phase I" pilot project to map the vegetation and riparian corridors of two square miles within the City of Atascadero. The purpose of this pilot project was to develop a forest and biological resources inventory methodology to map the entire Atascadero Colony.

Upon the completion of Phase I in late 2005, the City embarked upon Phase II. The plan of the Phase II project was to digitize and then classify vegetation areas for the entire City and Colony using the same aerial image and the methodologies developed during Phase I. Polygon survey areas were created using Ecognition software and attributed using manual methods. A woodland and forest type map was prepared that is compatible with the City's GIS system. The final map delineates and classifies 6959 polygons using the Wildlife Habitat Relations (WHR) used by the California Department of Fish and Game and compatible with the CALVEG vegetation classification system used by the US Forest Service. The GIS coverage was delivered to the City of Atascadero in April 2006. In order to assure quality the process included several days of ground surveys while polygons were being attributed, and an accuracy assessment described later in this report.

Phase III of the project was a tree inventory. One hundred twenty temporary cluster tree survey plots (163 fixed plots in all) were installed both by volunteers and by East-West Forestry staff during spring and autumn 2006. In addition to providing ground-based tree data to populate and describe the mapped polygons, the inventory was used for the accuracy assessment.

The final elements of the project were to identify key habitat, to compare Atascadero forest resources with surrounding woodland types, and to make recommendations for protection and management of critical habitat. Tom Gaman of East-West Forestry Associates will be making a presentation to the Council on the project and presenting recommendations.