

The Riparian Woodland is associated with both of these communities wherever watercourses are prevalent. At the lower elevations this woodland contains Valley Oak, Sycamore, Cottonwood and Willow. As elevations increase, the vegetation along these watercourses becomes more diverse and lush. Alder and Oregon Ash join Sycamore and Willow to form a vegetational pattern that denotes the existence of water and supports a large wildlife population.

From the standpoint of community planning, it is not essential to provide long lists of plant and animal species in order to formulate a plan that is sensitive to local flora and fauna. The Plan should concern itself with two major tasks concerning flora and fauna - 1) provide a tool which protects open space and maintains it in a relatively native form and 2) note the location, nesting sites and critical habitat of rare and endangered species and animals of special concern. As a corollary to these two tasks, the community plan should also recognize that in those areas that are to entertain development, the protection of existing vegetation should also be encouraged. In many cases where development is not of an intense nature, the co-existence of development and wildlife is possible.

In reference to community planning and its relationship to the natural landscape and wildlife, the following suggestions are put forth to ensure the compatibility of both features of the landscape.

- encourage cluster development to allow for development but at the same time provide for larger expanses of open space.
- discourage removal of significant vegetation (trees 6" in diameter and more) when property is developed.
- maintain an open space buffer (50 to 100') between development and riparian woodland.
- utilize native landscaping for erosion and aesthetic purposes.
- utilize large lot agricultural zoning to protect sites which support rare and endangered species.
- restrict development from slopes exceeding 30 percent, Chaparral hazardous fire areas, and floodways.

Sensitivity mapping is the initial process to develop a plan to maintain and protect the natural environment. An accurate location of significant vegetational regimes and wildlife populations of special concerns is critical in determining what areas should be protected from urban/suburban encroachment.

Subsequent to this mapping procedure appropriate zoning can be applied to areas that discourage or encourage development of some type. For example, large lot agricultural zoning would generally preclude development whereas rural residential zoning would spawn subdivisions.

Other tools available for protecting fragile landscapes or wildlife population are scenic easements, public purchase or property covenants. To properly assure the protection of local wildlife populations, the assistance of the Fish and Game Department and local biologists is necessary to accurately delineate the location and habitat of species such as the Southern Bald Eagle, Great Blue Heron rookeries, local deer herds, California Condor and concentration of raptor populations.

Flooding

Three Rivers is subject to Standard Project Floods and Intermediate Regional Floods from the Kaweah River and its tributaries. Intermediate Regional Floods, such as the December 1966 flood, are floods having an average frequency of occurrence in the order of once in 100 years although the flood may occur in any year. Standard project floods on the North, Middle, and South Forks of the Kaweah River would be about three feet higher than those of the Intermediate Regional Flood.

The Kaweah River system has a long history of periods of high water and flooding. Past records indicate periods of high water and flooding occurred in 1844, 1852, 1862, 1867, 1879, 1884, 1890, 1891, 1893, 1901, 1906, 1914, 1916, 1937, 1945, 1950, 1955, 1963, and 1966. Major floods occurred in 1862, 1868, 1906, 1937, 1950, 1955 and 1966 and can occur anytime during the period November through June. In 1962, the Army Corps of Engineers completed the flood control dam on the Kaweah River thus protecting Valley lands from flooding upstream.

The Kaweah River floodway, as delineated by the California State Reclamation Board, is shown generally on the Land Use Plan map; however, for detailed delineation, refer to the aerial photographs (one inch = 100 feet) on file in the County Planning Department and the Department of Public Works. Future developments within the floodway must have an encroachment permit approved by the Reclamation Board. Application forms for the encroachment permits can be obtained from the Department of Public Works, Flood Control Operation, Room 10, Courthouse, Visalia, CA 93277.