MEMORANDUM

DATE:         September 15, 2008

TO:          Board of Supervisors

FROM:         Lew C. Bauman  
              County Administrative Officer

SUBJECT:      County Administrative Officer’s Weekly Report for September 15, 2008

This is the weekly report by the County Administrative Officer to the Board of Supervisors.  This report provides information on issues affecting the County and the progress of County activities.

Planning

On June 22, 2008, the Monterey County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated to respond to the Basin-Complex Fire.  Expectations were met regarding the Monterey County’s Geographic Information System Resources prove their worth during Basin-Complex Fire.

Before containment could be achieved, this fire ultimately merged with the Indians’ Fire. The total area burned was approximately 240,000 acres, and over 75 structures were damaged or destroyed.

Throughout the activation, Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, and specifically the County’s GIS repository, proved to be an invaluable resource for decision support. The County’s GIS staff was able to quickly integrate daily fire perimeter data provided by the United State Forest Service (and others) with our data already stored in the repository to create a wealth of situation maps required by EOC operations managers, planners, and public information staff.

The County’s GIS data were used to create maps that provided a long list of information that was invaluable to the firefighting and safety efforts. The data and maps were used in the field, at the Incident Command (IC), included in the evacuation plans prepared for each area, and provided to state and federal agencies looking for information both in a visual and data format. The information provided by the county showed the locations of parcels with structures (to identify
immediate safety concerns), identified populations of each area (allowing an analysis of how many personnel were needed for evacuations), provided information on sensitive areas (to protect from spraying of fire retardant), identified areas where special needs housing was located (to focus efforts on evacuating those facilities), and many other invaluable resource locations.

While areas of improvement were identified, the overall performance of this technology in the EOC was very well received by all outside agencies who used the information to more efficiently do their jobs protecting lives and resources. This event has provided a window into how valuable GIS can be in responding to disasters.

This event has shown how GIS is a critical tool to help assess data in the EOC and share data quickly with the IC. As such, the County remains committed to build and improve on this database to make sure data is available when/if events happen. We could offer ideas on the types of data that could help improve the efficiency of our responses and assessments as part of a post-mortem critique of this event.

This concludes the CAO report.