

# NEWSLETTER OF THE SONOMA COUNTY CONSERVATION COUNCIL

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The Sonoma County Conservation Council is a federation of 20 local environmental organizations. In addition to providing space for our member organizations to meet, the Council serves as an information exchange where the expertise of one organization on a given issue can be shared with all. With the publication of this newsletter we have begun to try to reach out to the public at large as well.

### SCCC MEMBER GROUPS

- CA. Native Plant Society
- Milo Baker Ch. - 578-0595
- COAAST - 578-0595
- Community Network for Appropriate Tech -578-0595
- 11th Commandment Fellowship -578-0595
- Environmental Forum -578-0595
- Farallones Institute -874-3060
- Fieldguides -578-0595
- Friends of the Coast -575-0409
- League of Women Voters -546-5943
- Madrone Audubon Society -546-7492
- Recycling Ctr. -584-8666
- Sierra Club -544-7651
- Sonoma Earth Action-SSU
- Sonoma Co. Farmlands Group -576-0162
- Sonoma County Tomorrow -578-0595
- Sonoma County Trails Committee -578-0595
- Sonoma Land Trust-938-9119
- Western Sonoma County Rural Alliance -578-0595

## THE ENDANGERED LAGUNA

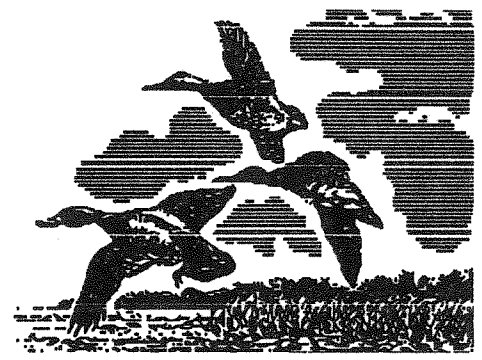
Richard Nichols  
Sebastopol Tomorrow

It's a five minute walk from downtown Sebastopol to a natural treasure unknown to many Sebastopol residents.

This treasure is the Laguna de Santa Rosa, a 13-mile long watercourse, marsh, flood control zone, greenbelt, and wildlife habitat. It is a place of tranquility in a growing urban clamor, with birds, mammals, fish and rare plants. Conservationists and lovers of the natural world know it as one of the most important geographical features in central Sonoma County.

Unfortunately, over the years, the Laguna has been largely abused and ignored. It is no longer the clean-flowing waterway, boated by picnickers and used as the local swimming hole. No longer crammed with perch and bass, the Laguna has been channelized, filled, stripped of vegetation, dirtied by dairy operations and sewage spills, and forgotten. Still, the Laguna is a natural gem literally in Sebastopol's front yard. The value of this resource is so great that it must be saved.

With increasing urbanization and explosive growth, public awareness of the Laguna is growing. The Laguna is important to the community for many reasons. It is the natural greenbelt for Sebastopol, protecting the city from Santa Rosa's urban sprawl. The flood-water retention mitigates Russian River flooding. Its rich diversity makes it an excellent area for school children as well as scientists to study;



and it can be enjoyed by hikers as well as amateur naturalists. Just as important, it is close to many urban centers, offering a quiet, easily accessible counterpart to city living.

The Laguna Advisory Committee, appointed by the Sebastopol City Council last January, presented its report on the Laguna to the Council on January 19. This report emphasizes the importance of the Laguna in all its natural functions, discusses both the damage and the remaining rich diversity, prospects for rehabilitation and enhancement, and possible funding sources.

1988 will be critical for the Laguna preservation effort. Mounting public interest will finally bring more active government participation. The City of Sebastopol Planning Commission is presently discussing the report and will present recommendations to the Council in mid-April. The Advisory Committee recommendations are broad in scope and suggest actions that the City could take locally and that the County could take on a regional basis.

There are several controversial recommendations. One is a call for no development in the remaining natural areas of the Laguna and a no net fill policy in the urban portions of the City below the flood