

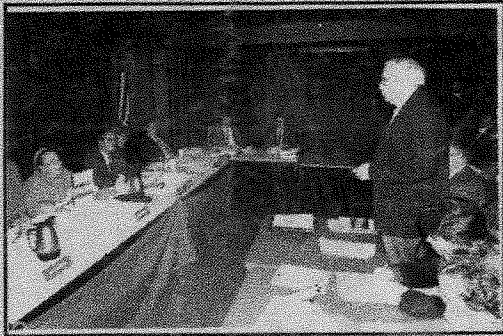
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JAN 88 THE PAPER

Laguna endangered by defoliation, fill, report says



REPORT ACCEPTED — Gwen Anderson speaks for the council in thanking Laguna advisory committee chairman, Robert Sharp, for a job well-done.

—photo Tom Roth

A massive replanting effort is needed if the Laguna de Santa Rosa is to be saved, a special committee reported to the Sebastopol City Council Tuesday.

The demise of native vegetation was one of the problems addressed in a 60-page report prepared by the Laguna Advisory Committee. The report was handed over to the council by Bob Sharp, a retired environmental biologist who, along with 15 other citizens appointed by the council, spent 13 months preparing it.

The report brings to light aspects of the Laguna not generally known. "At the theoretical 100-year flood peak, the Laguna would hold 80,000 acre feet of water that would otherwise end up covering Guerneville and Monte Rio," said committee head Sharp. If the report has a main thrust — it was written by subcommittees and reads accordingly — it is the need to replace vegetation that man has all but destroyed in the Laguna.

"Only 10 percent of the original riparian vegetation [woody plant species along streams and marshes] remains," said Sharp.

The trees fell prey to farmers clearing fields, and there was a general drying out of the area due to building in areas (Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, etc.) that had fed water to the Laguna. Sharp believes irrigation of the Laguna in the dry season may be necessary to promote a riparian revival.

Another big concern in the practice of filling in the Laguna. "There's a lot more awareness about the negative effects of filling there," Sharp said, but pointed out that house construction in the Laguna also constituted filling, a reference to Santa Rosa's creeping out into the floodplain.

As a general rule, according to the chairman, for every cubic foot of fill put in the Laguna, another seven and a half gallons of water runs off into the River.

The committee members received certificates of appreciation from the council, and were congratulated by council members and West Sonoma County Supervisor Ernie Carpenter, who promised to work with Sebastopol on a county-wide effort to revive the Laguna. "I'd like to congratulate the council on taking the lead in this," said the supervisor.

Councilwoman Anne Magnie thanked the committee for doing such a good job and saving the city a large chunk of money. "We could have paid a consultant \$50,000 to do something not even as adequate," she commented.

The council approved funding for the printing of more copies of the report — 12 of the first draft had been prepared — and sent the report on to the planning commission for its consideration.

—GARTH ENGDALH