

**Editorial** Sept. 20,**War in the wetlands?**by *Bill Haigwood*

A bold effort to achieve consensus rather than conflict over the future of the Laguna Santa Rosa is scheduled for this Saturday at the Sebastopol Veterans Building, 282 High Street, from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m.

You know that any meeting that starts at 8 a.m. on a Saturday morning in the summer has got to be a serious meeting. And this meeting, "The State of the Laguna Conference," is very serious!

On one side, you will find the dedicated and uncompromising environmentalists, and on the other side will be the equally determined and uncompromising owners of private property lying inside the proposed parameters of a Federal Wetlands Preserve and Regional Park. In the middle, hopefully, will be enough reasonable, objective, clear-thinking, practical visionaries to accomplish the objective of the conference; namely, a meeting of minds and agreement on the facts behind the various proposals for protecting and preserving the Laguna.

On the premise that "a problem thoroughly understood is a problem solved," the sponsors of the "State of the Laguna" conference have put together an impressive panel of experts to present the facts and, hopefully, build understanding.

The conference is sponsored by the cities of Sebastopol and Santa Rosa, County of Sonoma, California Department of Fish & Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Presenting the facts and various viewpoints will be Sebastopol Councilwoman Anne Magnie, Congressman Doug Bosco, Assemblyman Dan Hauser, Fifth District Supervisor Ernie Carpenter, Sebastopol Councilman Nick Stewart, representatives from numerous local, state and federal agencies, local citizens, ranchers, property owners, environmentalists and developers.

Following an introduction of the program by Magnie and Bosco, an overview of the natural history of the Laguna will be presented by Bill Cox, California Department of Fish & Game. The status of the Laguna today, how it is being used — and abused, will be followed by a panel discussion of the Laguna of tomorrow. Members of the audience will be invited to question panelists about their ideas for the future of the Laguna.

In an effort to clear up the significant confusion as to who regulates what in the Laguna, a panel of representatives from the controlling agencies will explain their areas of responsibility and the regulations they enforce.

A summary of the proceedings will be presented by Miles Ferris, director of utilities for the city of Santa Rosa.

The registration fee of \$10 includes a box lunch, an opportunity to express your views about the Laguna, and a ring-side seat at what may be the most informative and productive public meeting ever held in Sebastopol — or one of the most contentious conferences ever held in the State of California. Either way, it should prove fascinating — and it is important.

In 1963, Stewart Lee Udall, then secretary of the interior, wrote in *The Quiet Crisis*: "A land ethic for tomorrow should be as honest as Thoreau's Walden, and as comprehensive as the sensitive science of ecology. It should stress the oneness of our resources and the live-and-help-live logic of the great chain of life. If, in our haste to 'progress,' the economics of ecology are disregarded by citizens and policy makers alike, the result will be an ugly America."

As a member of the Sebastopol Laguna Advisory Committee, I discovered that there is a need for compromise between the extremes on the sides of environmentalism and private property rights, for somewhere in the middle are the rights of the public. Rather than War in the Wetlands, I would hope that the "State of the Laguna Conference" will lead to peace between the factions, a beautiful wetlands park for future generations, and fair compensation for private property owners.

Your participation can help make it happen!