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## APPLESAUCE

# Swamp of Dreams

BY BRUCE ROBINSON

**"IF YOU FUND IT, THEY WILL VOTE."**—Could it be that this cryptic message has haunted the dreams of Congressman Doug Bosco, prompting him to author the legislation that would channel \$20 million federal dollars into the creation of a national wildlife refuge in the Laguna de Santa Rosa?

Whatever his reasons, the Democrat from Occidental met a warm reception from West County environmental folk when he outlined his proposal at the State of the Laguna Conference in Sebastopol Sept. 23. Bosco opened the day-long public forum by addressing one of the few subjects on which he has not disappointed or alienated his most liberal West County constituents. Farmers with lands in the Laguna basin are another matter, as they view his bill with skepticism at best, a concern that the Congressman has so far addressed by simply redrawing the boundaries to omit the most vocal landholders. Significantly, there were no current maps of the proposed refuge available at the conference.

Nor did Bosco stick around long to face any possible critics. After fielding a few gentle questions (Len Swenson of the Sierra Club: "How can we help get this bill passed?"), the Congressman was on his way to another pressing commitment. Something about a parade in Rohnert Park.

**MEANWHILE BACK ON THE FARM**—Bosco's grandstanding notwithstanding, the concerns of agriculturalists and other Laguna property owners are valid and will have to be answered before a workable program of preservation and restoration can be put together. The good news is the general recognition that grazing, farming, vineyards and even orchards are all a part of the local ecosystem as well as the local economy, and the two are inextricably intertwined.

The emerging consensus apparent at the conference demonstrated an impressive confluence of ideas, perhaps best exemplified in the closing comments offered by Miles Ferris, Santa Rosa's head honcho for sewer issues. "If we're going to be successful [in preserving what's left of the Laguna environment and restoring some of the rest], we're going to have to reach common ground in such issues as development vs. the environment," he told the crowd, paraphrasing one of the afternoon's earlier speakers. The source? Tom "Manure Man" Lynch.

**HOWDY, POD-NER**—One of the quiet surprises of the day was the appearance of not one, but two self-confessed members of GREEN PEAS, the tortured acronym that has tossed the latest legal monkey wrench into the Harmony School District's efforts to secure a site for a badly needed second campus. Widely perceived as NIMBYists who have wrapped themselves in environmentalist rhetoric in a paranoid bid to any impacts from the 1980s away from their neighborhood, their presence in the public eye had previously been limited to comments from spokesperson Ann Maurice, a former school board candidate now busy suing the body to which she failed to win election.

The Laguna Conference provided a forum for a second PEA to step forward, when Gary Will identified himself as a GREEN PEAS member and proceeded to press state Fish and Game biologist Bill Cox for stricter enforcement of the agency's rules. Cox cited the standard truth about working with limited manpower resources, then delivered a swift reversal. Depositions and court testimony eat up man-hours that might otherwise be put to more constructive use, Cox explained, and "Just a few small lawsuits eliminates the capability of getting involved in a lot of other projects."

That was the last the PEAS were heard from that afternoon. Meanwhile the sentiment of most of the rest of the Occidental area community seems to be a clear message to the obstructionist "environmental" upstarts: "PEAS off!"