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Laguna refuge debated

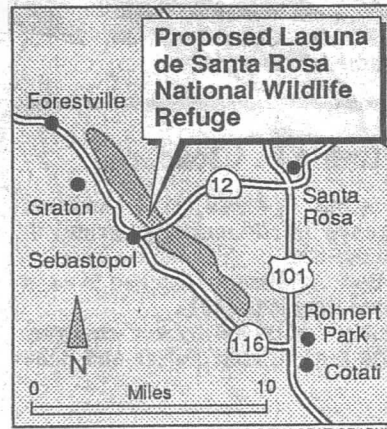
By EILEEN KLINEMAN
Staff Writer

After encountering opposition Tuesday from the Bush administration, Rep. Doug Bosco said in Washington Tuesday he may ask for \$10 million, half the amount initially proposed, to start up the Laguna de Santa Rosa National Wildlife Refuge.

Bosco's comments came after Sebastopol Councilwoman Anne Magnie told a House panel that the 9,000-acre wildlife refuge is necessary to preserve the vanishing Northern California wetlands that also serve as an important rest stop for migrating birds.

"It is a remnant of the once vast system of fresh water marshes spreading across our country and it is part of the larger system of fly ways for migrating waterfowl," said Sebastopol Councilwoman Anne Magnie.

But a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service official argued that the area was not important enough to gain the wildlife refuge status. A wildlife refuge designation restricts



activities to those which benefit the natural flora and fauna.

"It has very limited migratory bird resources, and endangered plants present in the area could be adequately protected through other means," said Rollin Sparrowe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge assistant director.

Sparrowe's testimony to the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee drew a sharp rebuke from Bosco, a Sebastopol Democrat.

Bosco, author of the legislation, accused the service of being in business to count fish and birds rather than a conservation agency.

"When do you make the changeover between counting and studying to doing something to
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preserve the habitat of these species?" he asked.

Bosco's bill would set aside wetlands system between Cotati and Forestville for permanent protection, with the purchase of land from owners willing to sell. It would be managed, and opened to the public

for tours and nature study, by state and federal wildlife experts.

Bosco, who received some unexpected backing from a Republican congressman, said after the hearing that he is planning to seek a compromise with the panel that would establish the reserve. "was a very good sign," he said.

States News Service contributed to this story.