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# Wastewater may be best hope for Laguna

by John H.K. Riley

Santa Rosa's large volume of tertiary-treated wastewater could be the last great hope for restoring significant portions of the Laguna de Santa Rosa, northern California's second largest freshwater marsh system and Sebastopol most prized environmental treasure, according to an ecologist and expert on the laguna.

damaged ecosystem.

Shrinking in size due to continual urban and agricultural expansion, the laguna, which forms the eastern boundary of the city of Sebastopol, could be revitalized through the systematic creation of wetlands and marshes useful in further purifying the highly treated wastewater which has already reached near-drinking water quality due to a state-of-

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—Marco Waaland

Following failed efforts two years ago to create a 20,000 acre federal wildlife refuge around the laguna, and more recently the Army Corps of Engineers' sudden refusal to restore 1000 acres of the laguna as an environmental mitigation project, Santa Rosa's wastewater could be the key to directly or indirectly restoring hundreds of acres of the laguna's

the-art filtration system.

Says Marco Waaland, a biologist who helped create Sebastopol's Laguna Park Plan, "Let's not be foolish and pass up a chance to restore some of these wetlands in the laguna with reclaimed wastewater if that's what is going to make it happen. There is no other mechanism to help restore (Please see *Laguna* page A11)



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Biologist Marco Waaland says creation of marshes and wetlands in the Laguna de Santa Rosa watershed could improve the water quality of the laguna and the Russian River. The laguna, viewed as the biggest polluter of the Russian River during the summer, is a catch basin for agricultural waste (animal manure) and urban runoff. This portion of the laguna is seen looking north from Occidental Rd. near Sanford Rd. towards Mt. St Helena. The laguna is a popular stopping place for migratory waterfowl.