

'Laguna in Balance' raises hope for troubled water system

by Barry W. Dugan
Sonoma West Editor

SEBASTOPOL — Visitors to the "Laguna in Balance" event Sunday found out that the Laguna de Santa Rosa is much more than a slow-moving creek that runs along the eastern edge of Sebastopol.

Not every one who tagged along on a tour of the waterway knew that the Laguna de Santa Rosa encompasses a 254-square-mile watershed, stretching from the Mayacamas Mountains east of Santa Rosa, to Cotati in the south and Mark West Creek in the north.

Not all visitors knew that the Laguna serves as a natural flood-control basin, with an estimated capacity of 80,000-acre feet of water, water that is stored during floods before eventually flowing to the Russian River.

Peter Otis of the state Regional Water Quality Control Board, said one inch of rain can raise the Laguna as much as 12 inches.

These were a few of the facts and fascinating tidbits that Otis shared during the tour, along with tour leaders Alan Buckmann of the Department of Fish and Game, and Carolyn Dixon who works on Laguna forestation projects with the city of Santa Rosa. Dixon pointed out that the Laguna was much more heavily forested before settlers arrived in the mid-1800s.

Some on the tour were sur-

prised to find out that the city of Sebastopol had its dump along the shores of the Laguna. The two ball fields next to the Community Center now sit atop the former landfill.

A Sunday morning cleanup that was part of the event unearthed remnants of the former dump, along with more recent flotsam from high water and trash dumpers. Among the more remarkable finds was a washing machine pulled from the banks of the Laguna, making the bottles, pallets, bed springs and other debris seem mundane.

Despite the past abuses and decades of human activities, the Laguna de Santa still serves as habitat for hundreds of native plants and animals. According to the Laguna Advisory Committee report to the city of Sebastopol completed in 1988, there are 253 species of birds, 20 species of mammals, 200 species of plants, 16 species of reptiles and amphibians, and about 20 species of fish.

In addition to the cleanup and tours, the event included a slide show, presentations, and informational booths set up inside the Sebastopol Community Center.

"I think it was a great success," said Jeff Edelheit, one of the organizers of the second annual event. "People who had not been at the Laguna before were surprised at the richness of the Laguna and (Please see *Laguna* page A12)

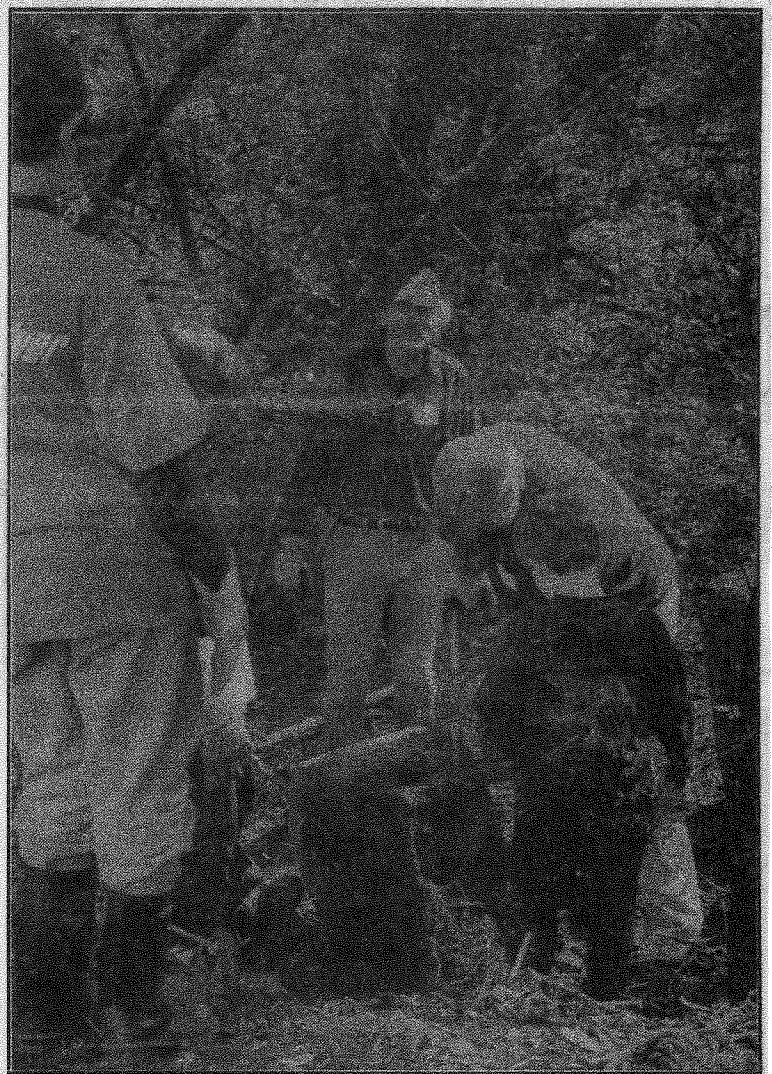
98.21

Sonoma West Times & News
May 6-12, 1998

MAY 6 - MAY 12, 1998
Sonoma West

Pg. 1

(Missing top photo of Carolyn Dixon pointing.)



photos by BARRY W. DUGAN

TOUR GUIDE — Carolyn Dixon (in top photo pointing) was among the tour guides during Sunday's Laguna in Balance event in Sebastopol. She points out the native and non-native plant life along the Laguna near the city's old sewage ponds. In photo below, volunteers participated in a Laguna cleanup near the Sebastopol Community Center in the morning. City Planning Director Kenyon Webster is in the background.