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Trail ...

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and restore the Laguna," said Litwin. "So many people have contributed to this project that I can't name them all."

Litwin did note the 1998 donation of \$400,000 from Sebastopol resident Emmett Blincoe, which started the city on the first phase of the preserve's construction. The loop trail is the fourth phase of the Laguna preserve, located behind the Laguna Youth Park on Morris Street. A \$258,000 grant

from the Coastal Conservancy helped build the trail.

Saturday's trail users started their hike at the entrance to the Laguna Preserve, north of the Youth Annex, then walked past city ponds and the baseball fields at Laguna Youth Park.

They crossed the Laguna channel over the floating bridge behind the ball fields, then began hiking on the new trail that loops around the Barlow Company's apple waste spray field.

On the way to the observation mound, located in

the northeast corner of the spray field, the hikers passed artists capturing views of the Laguna preserve on canvas. Docents from the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation led hikers on trail walks, and a self-guided nature walk was also available.

Tom Lambert, representing the Laguna Foundation, said one of the foundation's missions is to educate people about the Laguna.

"Today, we're celebrating a huge step in that direction by providing access," said Lambert. Greater access to the Laguna will provide more educational opportuni-

ties, and the foundation will be working with other public agencies to create even more access, said Lambert.

William Haigwood, president Emeritus of the Laguna Foundation, said the cause of restoring the Laguna has brought the people of Sebastopol together.

"The dream of restoring and preserving the Laguna de Santa Rosa has unified the community of Sebastopol more than any other single activity," said Haigwood. "There have been many projects, pushed by private interest groups in the community with

varying degrees of conflict and success; but the one arena where all the factions are on one side is 'saving the Laguna.'"

At the end of the dedication, Litwin stood on a trail bench and announced to the applauding crowd, "I officially declare this trail open!"

The loop trail can be accessed by crossing the floating bridge behind Laguna Youth Park and is open from sunrise until sunset.

Contact the Sebastopol Planning Department at 823-6167 for more information.