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Supes OK Balletto Ranch open space deal

by Dawn Pillsbury
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SANTA ROSA — The Laguna trail system is one step closer to reality this week with the Board of Supervisors' approval of a \$2.6 million open space deal for the Balletto Ranch.

"I think it's a good deal," said Laguna watchdog Helen Shane. "We've spent a lot of open space money

on places not easily accessible to the public. I like those deals. But I also like to see things in our own back yard."

The 272-acre ranch, which stretches along the Laguna from the Laguna Park and Sebastopol Teen Center in the south to Occidental Road in the north, is planted in pinot noir grapes. Owner John Balletto has said he is set to sell the ranch in March,

but will not discuss it further.

The easement is in two parts, an agricultural and a forever wild easement, both of which prohibit any residential development of the land. The forever wild easement is on 65 acres of valley oaks and riparian habitat south of where Duer Creek crosses the property to join the Laguna and in a corridor along the Laguna. The 189-acre agri-

culture easement encompasses most of the rest of the property, except for a 20-acre agricultural complex, which was recently converted from a vegetable packing plant to a winery for Sonoma Oaks Winery.

Part of the deal is also trail easements that will allow the area to connect to the proposed Laguna de Santa Rosa trail system.

In other open space (Please see *Balletto* page A12)

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news, the board also approved the district looking into buying the Poncia Dairy in Sebastopol and the Pryor Ranch in Healdsburg.

The Poncia Dairy is a

256-acre ranch, owned by the Poncia family, at 5335 Burnside Rd. The conservation easement would mean no more residential development on the property and keep the land in agricultural use.

The Pryor Ranch, a 1,509-acre ranch on

Sweetwater Springs Road, is owned by the Pryor family and is used mostly for family gatherings and some cattle grazing. The forever wild conservation easement would prevent more residential development and allow for limited agricultural use.