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Importance of the Wetlands Ordinance

Editor:

The recently passed Wetlands Ordinance, although only a small step in the right direction, has some significance.

First, it recognizes, by ordinance, an element of the General Plan calling for the protection of "The Laguna Riparian Grassland Complex from further encroachment by uses which will significantly reduce in wildlife habitat value and associated vegetation," (objective C1, pg. 14), "enhance the biotic and visual qualities of the waterways," (objective B4.2, pg. 12), and "preserve land and water areas essential for the survival of significant and rare wildlife species" (objective C5, pg. 15).

Second, the ordinance places a significant portion of the riparian forest along the rail right-of-way into parks and Open Space Zoning from its previous zone of Industrial. This parcel is part of Policy 12.2 (pg. 26), to "prepare a plan for the development of a linear park along the Laguna de Santa Rosa."

Third, the ordinance recognizes "that the quality of life in Sebastopol is enhanced greatly by a park system which **adequately** serves the recreation and open space needs of the community" (pg. 25).

In response to Mr. Siano's comments that if open space advocates "want it, they should buy it," this is precisely what taxpayers do. If they want improved roads, schools or water systems, people don't use their own private funds but

authorize elected officials to spend tax funds for these purposes. Open space is an amenity not unlike good roads and clean air which many taxpayers in Sonoma County demand.

Finally, thank you Sebastopol City Council for taking this positive step.

Richard Nichols
Sebastopol Tomorrow