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**RULED OUT** — Sebastopol Ready Mix won't be washing gravel in nearby Laguna. THE PAPER/Mazzullo

'Buffer against cancer known as Santa Rosa'

## Sebastopol takes 'giant step' to preserve Laguna

The Sebastopol City Council voted unanimously Tuesday night to include several parcels which are part of the Laguna in the Wetlands Ordinance adopted in August. The ordinance will serve to protect and preserve the delicate ecology of the wetlands environment.

Last month, City Manager Mel Davis suggested in a memo to the council that it exempt two city-owned parcels from the ordinance: 11 acres encompassing the city's former sewer plant and pond site and 2.7 acres adjacent to Sebastopol Ready-Mix on Morris Ave. The cement company proposed to purchase that property and set up a gravel-washing facility.

His memo caused an uproar among Sebastopol's citizenry, who were not only angry at the danger to the environment, but questioned the propriety of his making such a suggestion after the close of the public hearing. The council voted it would be prudent to hear from the public again before deciding which parcels to include in the land covered by the ordinance.

In the interim, Davis offered a compromise proposal which would exempt from the ordinance the western portion of the sewer plant location which has already been filled in with dirt and is not considered prime Laguna land. The eastern portion, where ponds are still maintained, would be included in the "W" (Wetlands) zone.

Nichols reiterated the fear expressed by many Sebastopol residents. "It is our only buffer against that cancer known as Santa Rosa."

In contrast to the rest of the comments, Scott Carter, who represented the owners of Fircrest Mobile Home Park, expressed dismay that his clients' property was included in the "W" zone. The zoning, which is an overlay to existing ordinances, limits residential building to one dwelling per five acres. Given this stringent criterion, his clients' ability to expand their park is limited. He asked the council to wait until he could bring them more information regarding the property.

The council, which has been studying the issue for over three years, was not interested in any further delays. Councilwoman Gwen Anderson said, "We've studied this thing to death. You're here at the 11th hour. Frankly, I don't think there's any information you could bring us that would change our minds."

And there was no further delay. They voted to include both the acreage that Sebastopol Ready-Mix wanted to purchase and the eastern two-thirds of the old sewer plant site within the wetlands zoning area. The filled-in western site was excluded.

The council then went a step further in voting to establish a citizen's advisory committee to work in conjunction with the city to set up a "Laguna Enhancement Program." Councilwoman Anne Magnie expressed concern that the city not take this on alone. "We need joint agreements between the city, county, state and the feds to set up a preserve. Enhancement sounds too weak."

Anderson echoed this sentiment. "The city could not afford what I can envision out there." If the council is true to its word, they have taken a giant step toward preserving the unusual wildlife habitat known as the Laguna.

—RICKI MAZZULLO

THE PAPER

OCT. 8, 1986