

level of 765 feet. This policy would preserve the natural habitat and maintain the crucial flood carrying capacity. Filling in the flood plain is a major contributing factor to rising flooding. It will be important for Russian River and Laguna protectionists to work together for the good of the entire ecosystem.

Another recommendation is that the City implement the General Plan and create a Laguna Linear Park within the City Sphere of Influence. The park would emphasize preservation and enhancement and provide low impact recreation opportunities such as a nature trail. By creating a park, the City would demonstrate a commitment and set an example for County and State entities. To that end, the report calls for a cohesive regional planning effort, bringing into play County, State, and Federal entities, and suggests that the City of Sebastopol take an active role in the effort.

The City Council will hold a public hearing on the Laguna Report on **Monday, April 25th, 7:00 P.M., at the Sebastopol Community Center on Morris St.** You are encouraged to attend this meeting. In the meantime, please write letters to the Sebastopol City Council at: **City Hall, 7120 Bodega Ave., Sebastopol, Ca. 95472.**

The Laguna Report is at the Library in Sebastopol or for sale at the Planning Office for anyone who may wish to read it prior to the meeting. If you have any questions, please call friends of the Laguna at: 823-4695 or Sebastopol Tomorrow at: 823-7909 DAY or 823-4071 EVENINGS.

### Santa Rosa Wastewater Update

Brenda Adelman  
River Citizen's Sewer Committee

Santa Rosa has issued Negative Declarations (no detailed environmental review necessary because there are no significant adverse environmental impacts) on two pieces of its current wastewater treatment plant expansion design. By piecemealing its projects and determining that there are no significant impacts,

Santa Rosa hopes to circumvent the impending lawsuit which challenges its environmental process and documentation on all aspects of the long range wastewater treatment project. One of the key arguments of the lawsuit is that the whole project has never been described, and therefore the significant effects and impacts have not been adequately examined. This is particularly true for the long range cumulative impacts.

In Feb. 1985, City consultants (not CH2MHill) determined that an EIR was necessary for the Sludge Dewatering Facility. Based on the fact that it relocated the planned facility siting in 1988, Santa Rosa has now determined that an EIR is no longer necessary. It has issued a negative declaration and set the deadline for receiving written comments by April 11, 1988.

The other project, "Flow Equalization Improvements", is designed to free up some ponds that are now being used to store old sludge by processing that sludge and rebuilding the pond to serve for flow equalization purposes. Written comments for that project are due by April 19, 1988. Copies of both negative declarations are available at the Santa Rosa Department of Community Development (576-5484).

The most significant issues not dealt with in these documents, besides the lack of a total project description, is the inadequate description of sludge disposal at the County landfill site, as well as the impacts on City and County streets from transporting large amounts of sludge to the County dump near Petaluma. Almost 6000 extra tons of sludge (about 3500 truck loads full) will be added to the landfill in order to clear the basins needed for flow equalization. This will take three to four large semi trucks per day for about three months (this doesn't include the normal daily truckloads of sludge). There are bound to be impacts on County roads as well as certain risks associated with hauling any material. The assumption is made that since the material is not "toxic", there is no danger related to hauling it. Further, no reference is made to the significant public controversy over the location of the new County landfill site and exacerbation of the problem by these additional loadings.

**Comments need to be received on these two projects at the Community Development Department by April 11th (Sludge Dewatering Facility) and April 19th (Flow Equalization Pond).** Call Brenda (869-0410) for more information.

### THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE BULLDOZER

Steve Klausner  
President, Sonoma County Conservation Council

I'd like to welcome our many new friends who have recently joined the Environmental Center. Thank You. Your support is important to us in many ways. The large number of contributions received was very heartening and enabled us to launch this newsletter. But we need something from you of even greater value.

Become informed on the issues affecting Sonoma County, discuss them with your friends and neighbors, and most important of all **WRITE LETTERS!**

It is amazing the amount of influence an individual can exercise by expressing his or her opinion. Here at the local level it doesn't take much to get public officials' attention. A mere 20 to 30 letters on a given issue and they realize they had better respond, because there are hundreds more out there that share each of those writers' opinions. What's more, they appreciate hearing from you; they don't like operating in a vacuum. And don't be afraid to write once in a while when you think they did something right.

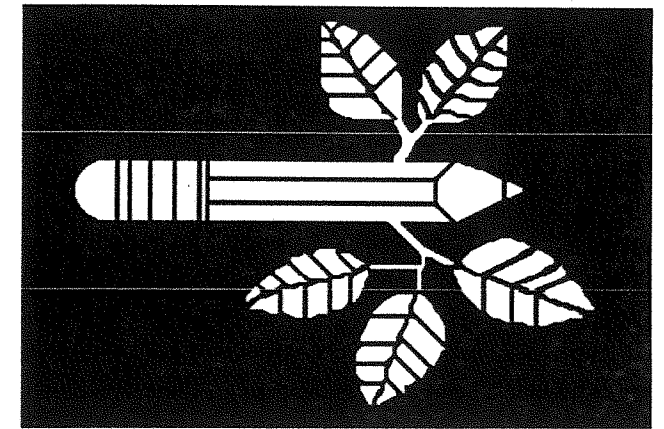
The best letters are simple, short, and to the point. Postcards are great. You don't need to try to analyze the issue or offer solutions; our environmental organizations are busy doing that. Your letters strengthen their lobbying efforts.

So join our "letter of the month" club. Pick an issue out of each month's newsletter and let somebody who can do something about it know how you feel.

### Developers Propose that Building Permits be Exempt from Environmental Review

It's actually a breathtaking experience to read AB 2959, legislation proposed by the Southern California building industry.

#1 - The bill exempts all building permits from environmental review. AB 2959 would declare the issuance of a building permit - the final approval step in the development process - to be a ministerial act in all circumstances. "Ministerial" actions taken by local governments are those where no discretionary decisions are involved, where an objective list of criteria either has or has not been met. In fact, most building permits are ministerial- by the time a project has reached that point in the planning and permitting process, all of the difficult subjective decisions have been made. However, as with most things in life, there are exceptions to this norm. New information about the development may arise or the project may have significant unresolved impacts on the environment. AB 2959



would simply declare that, regardless of the facts, no building permit decisions would be subject to environmental review.

#2 - AB 2959 severely limits the traditional planning authority which local government exercises when approving a development proposal. The bill does this by specifying that once a building permit has been issued, no new requirements or conditions may be placed on a project. Existing law, on the other hand, does not insulate the developer from such requirements until substantial work has been performed on the project and substantial investments have been made. This is because building permits can be obtained up to one year before actual construction work begins. During that time it is possible that changed information or local circumstances mandate the imposition of new requirements on a developer in order to maintain a community's quality of life.

#3 - AB 2959 goes even further when the local government issuing the building permit is a newly incorporated city. In that case, the new City Council may impose no requirements or conditions, *even prior to granting the permit*, beyond those which were in effect at the county level when the developer *applied* for the building permit. The effect of this portion of the bill would be to rob new cities of any ability to control development within their boundaries, which is often the entire purpose for which a new city was formed by its voters. Ask your Assembly Representative for a copy of the bill.

If you would like to contribute an article to the SCCC Newsletter, please mail a typewritten copy of it to: SCCC, POB 4346, Santa Rosa, Ca. 95402. Please specify that it is a newsletter submission, and include the author's name and organization. Submissions must be received by the 23rd of the month. The layout and design of this newsletter was done by Elizabeth Eddins. You can call her at 538-5916 if there are questions.