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Bosco to headline Laguna tour

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Sebastopol environmentalist Bob Sharp will be joined by Congressman Douglas Bosco (D-Occidental) and a busload of county, state, and federal officials in a media spotlighted tour of the Laguna de Santa Rosa later this month.

Sharp served as chairman of Sebastopol's Laguna Committee, a body that recently recommended tough protection measures for the wetlands which extend from Sebastopol to Rohnert Park. Bosco has joined the call for protection, proposing last month that the Laguna be turned into a national wildlife refuge.

A preliminary list of May 31 Laguna tourists include Bosco, Sharp, Santa Rosa City Manager Ken Blackman, Sebastopol City Manager Mel David, Fifth District Supervisor Ernie Carpenter, Water Agency Director Bob Beach, Sonoma Land Trust Director Joan Vilms, Sierra Club Chapter President Brenda Adelman, and representatives from the Farm Bureau, North Coast Builders Exchange, Friends of the Laguna, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Wildlife Service, and state Fish and Game Department.

"We want to bring everyone together to have a common understanding of what area we are talking about, what are the issues, and what would be accomplished by a national wildlife refuge designation," said Joel Rogers, a Bosco aide in Santa Rosa.

Rogers said that legislation would be needed to establish the Laguna as a wildlife refuge; then appropriations would have to be sought. No boundaries of the refuge have been determined yet, and only property belonging to willing sellers would be bought, he said.

According to Suzanne Nelson, a Laguna Committee member, who will host officials and the press at her home following the tour, the event was Bosco's idea.

"He's sort of taken the ball," said Nelson. "We mentioned this a couple of months ago; we added a little pressure. Originally he didn't want it publicized; now he does."

Lionel Gambill, Bosco's remaining Democratic opponent in a June primary battle that will be fought mainly on environmental issues, this week applauded Bosco for his Laguna efforts. "If Doug supports that [preservation of the Laguna], then he and I are on the same side of the issue."

Gambill said that he spoke in favor of the Laguna Committee recommendations several months ago before the Sebastopol Planning Commission.

—TOM ROTH AND SARA PEYTON