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Secrets of a 'Hidden' Lagoon

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diction of a number of public agencies, including the city of Santa Rosa, which owns or irrigates nearly 4,000 acres; the state Department of Fish and Game, and the Sonoma County Water Agency.

There is some access to the waterway from Occidental Road as it crosses the Laguna just north of Sebastopol between Highway 116 at High School Road north of town, where a canoe, whose occupants are on the lookout for submerged fence posts, might be launched.

Highway 12 crosses the Laguna at Sebastopol's eastern edge.

Guerneville Road crosses a more northerly stretch of the Laguna as it runs northwest from Santa Rosa to the Russian River, but because of private property concerns, land access from those points is virtually impossible.

Also, because the Laguna is basically a wetland, other sections are hard to traverse because of boggy conditions or, where riparian habitat remains intact, impossibly thick vegetation.



As frustrating as it is to strangers, the Laguna's isolation and difficult access has proven to be its salvation.

Land trust officer Vilms, as

well as a number of other Sonoma County environmentalists, including members of the ad hoc Sebastopol Laguna Advisory Committee, have been working with state, city and county officials to facilitate eventual public ownership of the Laguna.

"Given the rate of development in Santa Rosa and Sebastopol," she said, "the fact that the Laguna remains a wildlife area with such high natural values makes it all the more important and special," she said.

Indeed, U.S. Representative Douglas Bosco, D-Occidental, was recently taken on a brief tour of the embattled Laguna by environmentalists. He promised federal help if competing local interests can come up with a plan to save it.

"Nobody disagrees that the Laguna is a valuable resource that deserves to be protected," Vilms said. "It is reaching agreement on how to keep it safe that is the key. I believe it can be protected and will be protected and that it will be a win-win situation for all, including the wildlife."

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