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Laguna...

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preventing evaporation and keeping the water cool and plentiful.

Another factor in the water quality of the laguna is pollution from the municipal sewage plants, which have been discharging water into the laguna since 1924.

Excessive nutrients from sewage, dairy wastes and run-off fertilizer from farmlands has entered the laguna and caused algal growth and eutrophication (lack of oxygen).

Meanwhile, the loss of riparian forest and trees which served as nesting grounds for wildlife and birds has caused certain species, such as the red tail hawk, to leave the area.

One of Cox's goals is to bring back the flowing stream of the laguna, at least partially, by making

ponds with check dams. With more water and plants, the area could be used as a wildlife farm, he said.

Cox reported that in Oregon, a stream that used to support trout, but dried up in the summer, was brought back through exclusion fencing to keep cattle out. After several years, Cox said the willows grew back and the stream was actively flowing with plenty of water to support fish.

Even at present the laguna harbors a multitude of plant and animal life. The channels serve as prime feeding grounds for herons and egrets, the marsh supports ducks and coots, the grasslands contain pheasant and meadowlarks and the woodlands contain owls, mice deer and raccoons.

As for plant life, the freshwater marshes that are left contain rushes and dockweed, the riparian wood

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contains willows, Oregon Ash and box elders, the grasslands contain rushes, and the oak savannas and woodlands still contain oak trees and other broadleaf trees.

However, due to heavy grazing and non-replacement of oak trees, many of the old oak trees are disappearing.

While the Sonoma County General Plan has listed goals to enhance riparian habitats such as vernal pools and construct an extensive trail system which would link urban areas with parklands in the laguna area, neither of these goals has come to fruition.

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SEBASTOPOL

Laguna review

The City Council met late into the night Tuesday to review an advisory committee's study for enhancing the Laguna de Santa Rosa, but members once more put off a decision on the most debated recommendation.

The council and committee members did agree to the wording for eight recommendations on enhancing the waterway. Another 17 recommendations may be taken up next Wednesday.

Mayor Anne Magpie sought to settle whether Sebastopol will prohibit developers from adding to the total amount of fill in the laguna flood plain — the recommendation that been the focus of the debate. The council had set time aside during its past two meetings specifically to discuss the proposed prohibition.

But Councilman Richard Johnson said he preferred to focus attention on the entire laguna study rather than make the fill question the "pinnacle point" on protecting the waterway.

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