

Wetlands maps need work

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by Dan Collins

Approval of Sebastopol's revised wetlands ordinance is just the first step in protecting the sensitive Laguna de Santa Rosa and other native wetlands in the area.

The city council last week discussed what action must now be taken to implement the ordinance, and concluded that the planning commission was the appropriate panel to explore which areas in and around the city should be rezoned to wetlands districts.

Calling the mapping of the wetlands "a major undertaking," Councilman Richard Johnson said the task should be done very methodically to enable property owners adequate time for questions and comments.

Under the new law, which will go into effect next month, lands identified as meeting the

definition of wetlands, secondary wetlands and wetlands fringe districts will be rezoned and subject to special requirements before being developed.

Although councilman Nichols Stewart suggested looking at wetlands west of the city along Atascadero Creek, the council opted to limit the scope of their first study to properties in the immediate vicinity of the Laguna and its environs.

City planning consultant Bruce Aspinall said that the next step in the process of applying the new ordinance is a review by the planning commission, tentatively slated for mid-August.

Eventually, he said, all potential wetlands areas need to be explored. "We should probably take a look at the entire urban boundary to get an idea of what the ultimate zoning pattern will look like," Aspinall said.