

Fate of Laguna refuge subject of hearing

by John B. Burns

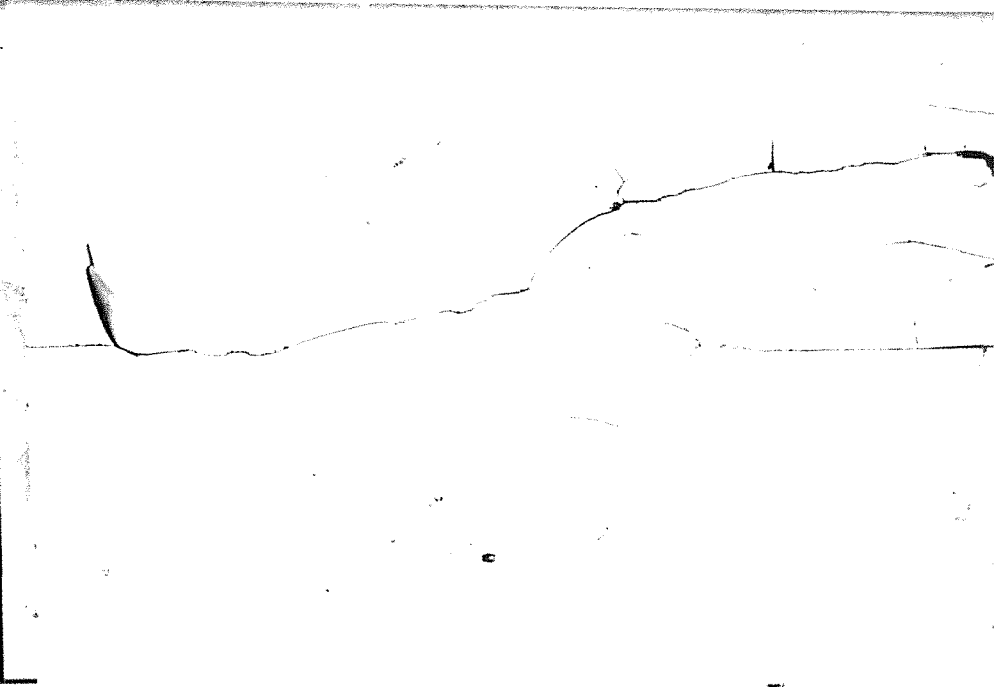
A Congressional hearing to determine the fate of the proposed \$20 million, 9000 acre Laguna de Santa Rosa National Wildlife Refuge will be held July 31 in Washington D.C. where Sebastopol City Councilwoman Anne Magnie and Laguna Technical Advisory Committee Chair Bob Sharp are expected to testify for its adoption.

Although earlier plans called for a local hearing to ensure that maximum public input was received, an aide to Congressman

Doug Bosco said this week that "in order to move the bill more quickly, it became evident that we would have to forgo the local hearing."

As proposed, Bosco's legislation would "protect the remaining wetland habitat in the Laguna de Santa Rosa and the many fish, wildlife and plant communities that exist there." The proposed refuge would extend roughly from just east of the Hessel area on the south to the community of Windsor on the north, encompassing the narrow

(Please turn to page A11)



7-18-90

Seba. T. & N.

Laguna . . . (Continued from front page)

laguna channel that runs along the eastern boundary of Sebastopol to the Russian River.

The second largest freshwater marsh system in California, the laguna is a natural flood control valve and home to numerous plants and wildlife that are threatened by "urban development, ineffective land and water management practices, overlapping federal, state and local jurisdictions and inadequate enforcement of existing regulations," according to the legislation.

Because this year's session of Congress will conclude in the fall, Bosco Aide Joel Rogers said that time was running out to have the House of Representatives Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee review and approve the legislation so that a full vote could be taken by the

House before November.

Bosco is currently laying the groundwork with California Senators Alan Cranston and Pete Wilson to have the bill introduced simultaneously in the Senate, according to Rogers, who said the bill could receive final governmental approval by year's end if all goes well.

The bill's genesis sprang from local concerns over the future of the laguna which led to Bosco's formation of the Laguna Technical Advisory Committee in 1987. That committee's recommendations, completed in 1988, formed the basis for the legislation which was the subject of a conference last September during which input from builders, environmentalists, residents, politicians, farmers, and biologists was heard to ensure the bill had the widest possible local support base.

As a result of concerns expressed by local farmers, the size of the proposed refuge was

eventually reduced by about 2000 acres which had originally included single family residences, dairies and other agricultural operations.

Although many farms and ranches were left within the boundaries of the current refuge proposal, Bosco has assured local farmers that the government will not take their lands unless they are willing to sell.

Sonoma County Farm Bureau Executive Director Judy Van Winkle confirmed this week that her organization continued to have concerns regarding farmers' ability to say "no" to government regulators seeking to purchase their property.

She added that another concern of the agricultural commu-

nity was a perceived need to reword the bill to ensure "there would be no increased regulatory burden on ag lands situated within the proposed refuge boundaries."

Rogers said his office "would be in dialogue (with the Farm Bureau) during the next two weeks to make sure the bill meets their needs."

Rogers said that written com-

ments from the agricultural community would be included and considered with all other input so long as it is received by July 31.

Weather

July	Low	High	Rain
9	54	84	0