

Laguna advocates angry at abandonment of restoration

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by Andrew Jowers

For the second time in three years, a multi-million dollar federal proposal to buy and restore large sections of the Laguna de Santa Rosa has fallen through, shocking laguna preservationists but not dampening their determination to fight for the wetlands at the local level.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' decision not to purchase 1,000 laguna acres to compensate for stream habitat lost when Warm Springs Dam near Healdsburg was built in the late 1970s was announced in a terse, one-page letter to the city of Sebastopol.

The Corps, finding itself under no legal obligation to purchase the land, said any further effort to mitigate damage "is not justified," said Col. Laurence Sadoff, Corps district engineer in Sacramento.

The decision came despite a

two-year, \$80,000 study by corps' environmental planners recommending the purchase, said Tom Roth, aide to Congressman Frank Riggs, a strong backer of the plan.

Indeed, the study—which has not been made public and required many hours of work by local environmentalists and state agencies—dealt only with how the compensation could be done, not whether it was required. The corps' legal obligation could have been determined in a day, Roth said.

"Maybe they had good intentions at first, but then realized money was very tight and here was \$20 million they didn't have to spend," he said. "They knew two years ago they didn't have to do it. We find the whole thing very objectionable."

Perry Metzger, corps project manager at Warm Springs Dam, denied that money was the issue.

The corps has fulfilled its obligations under the initial agreement to build the dam, "and it was decided there was no more need for further mitigation," he said. "There was never a commitment that we'd ever

really do it."

The decision was based on the corps' obligation, not on whether restoration in the laguna was needed, he said.

As early as April, corps environmentalists (Please see *Angry* page A15)

Few oppose affordable housing development

by Janice Drickey

A scaled down 48-home, mixed-income housing development proposed for Gravenstein Hwy. No. garnered surprisingly little opposition during a public hearing last week before the Sebastopol Planning Commission.

"Orchard Park," a subdivision proposed for a defunct apple orchard on the northern edge of Sebastopol, is a development of Gardner Homes in

Santa Rosa, owned by Rich and Nancy Gardner. The couple created the affordable Parkside housing project in Santa Rosa which was featured last year in *Life* magazine's Year in Pictures under "Hopeful Signs," for creating housing that "working people can afford without the red tape of government subsidy programs."

What makes the Gardner project unique is the concept of a "silent second" mortgage in (Please see *Few* page A13)