

"Restoration, NOT Mitigation"

"Restoration, Not Mitigation"

97.10

4-30-97

Editor, Santa Rosa Press Democrat,

Conservationists have been working for years to save the dwindling resource known as the Laguna de Santa Rosa. An estimated 87% of the Laguna and upland environs has been badly degraded or destroyed. Wetlands in California and The U.S. are still disappearing at an astounding rate. People of differing political positions and ages have come together to save the precious Laguna resource. The city of Sebastopol and its citizens are the leaders in this endeavor. But as we work at saving the Laguna, plans are being made to undo the work.

Two new projects are being proposed for the Laguna. The City of Santa Rosa is proposing a golf course on the edge of the floodplain. The Sebastopol Charter School is proposing to build a school on upland considered vital to protecting the Laguna ecosystem. These proposals are being made in a vacuum. There is little recognition of the importance of this ecosystem and all the effort that has gone into saving it. The proponents of these projects argue that they will provide restoration of land in exchange for the projects. What they don't realize is that the Laguna cannot take anymore damage. Mitigation is not acceptable, no more damage allowed thank you. Only restoration of the Laguna is acceptable.

The city of Santa Rosa should restore all 360 acres of the Kelly Farm golf course site, creating a natural park, and look for a less sensitive site for a course. The Charter school should withdraw their proposal and ask the owners to sell to the Open Space District. The best lesson they can teach their students is environmental responsibility.

Richard Nichols
Sebastopol