

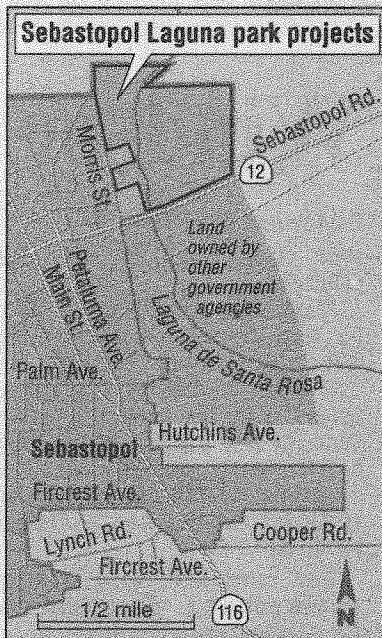
Laguna nature trail on track

By LORIA A. CARTER
Staff Writer

SEBASTOPOL — A nature trail, park benches and a scenic overlook to a wetlands preserve may be built as soon as October if a plan before the Sebastopol City Council is approved Tuesday.

Council members are expected to endorse specific plans and open bids for those projects and others in the Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetlands Preserve at the northeast city limits.

Kim Cordell, executive director of the Laguna Foundation, has been working on the project since



1986. She said this is a symbolic first step in a long process to complete the much larger Laguna Preserve master plan.

"It's going to really give people a use for and an appreciation of the laguna," she said. "Suddenly the preserve has become tangible. It's not just an idea floating out there now."

The Planning Commission and Design Review Board also will review the plan, which would then go to the Laguna Foundation, which pays for projects for the preserve. These plans, estimated to cost \$111,000, would be funded with a \$200,000 gift from retired Sebastopol builder Emmett Blincoe.

The city commissioned Questa Engineering of Point Richmond in May to design plans for small-scale, relatively simple projects that could be completed before the rainy season, Sebastopol Planning Director Kenyon Webster said.

"This is the first batch of projects," he said. "We hope we'll be able to do more in the next few years, but that will depend on private grants and donations."

Questa's implementation plan, for which the city paid \$78,000, calls for a 1,700-foot walking and biking trail that enters off Morris

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overlooks open space.

About 600 native trees, grass and brush would be planted along the trail and a bike rack would be installed near the entry. A "Launch the Laguna" community cleanup day on Sept. 20 will help clear the area of non-native blackberry vines, old fencing and other debris.

The City Council also is expected to vote Tuesday to move a Goodwill donation trailer to make way for the trailhead. The trailer has sat on Morris Street since 1989.

Cathleen Barnier, president and chief executive officer of Goodwill Industries of the Redwood Em-

pire, said the organization wants to stay in Sebastopol and will seek another parcel.

But moving may require leasing a new site. The city allows the center to occupy the land at no cost.

"Donations are considerable there. We're well-established; people know we're there. It definitely will be an inconvenience, but compared with what's happening, we need to move," she said.

The 13-mile-long laguna stretches from Rohnert Park to Forestville. The waterway is habitat for nearly 300 species of plants, more than 200 kinds of birds and 19 different mammals. It twice was proposed to become a national wildlife refuge.