

Angry . . .

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environmental resources planner Donna Stanek told the *Sebastopol Times & News* that while the report recommended purchase of the land, the corps was not obligated to pursue it.

Nevertheless, the corps' decision shocked laguna preservationists, said Kim Cordell, executive director of the Laguna Foundation.

"I'd say the reaction of every-

and could have taken land from property owners through eminent domain.

Under the corps project, adjoining parcels of land adjacent to property owned by the state Department of Fish and Game and the Santa Rosa Wastewater Reclamation District would have been purchased from willing sellers and restored close to a natural state.

The plan was expected to cost \$27.5 million, not yet authorized by Congress, with the Sonoma County Water Agency con-

tion said local efforts to preserve the laguna will continue, despite the corps' decision. With the Foundation's help, Sebastopol is working on a long-range laguna preservation plan, and has approved a small laguna park near the Sebastopol Community Center.

"The Laguna Foundation continues to pursue enhancement on a local level, whether or not

there is support at the national level," she said.

The Corps of Engineers, to compensate for the dam damage, has already established a large wildlife refuge near Lake Sonoma; constructed a fish hatchery there; and improved the area downstream from the dam, said Metzger, the corps dam manager.

According to Stanek, the corps

environmental planner, during the preparation of the environmental impact statement for the Warm Spring Dam, none of the review agencies considered the loss of the riparian habitat and gravel bars in Dry Creek below the dam. That omission legally absolved the corps from having to offset the loss and pursue mitigation projects other than those already completed,

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—Kim Cordell

one involved in the process is one of disbelief and incredulity," she said. "The corps approached us on this, and never once indicated mitigation was not possible. It was always a question of how, not if. A lot of people feel angry. The citizens of Sonoma County deserve an explanation."

The collapse of the laguna purchase follows a doomed 1989 proposal by former Congressman Doug Bosco to create a 9,000-acre national wildlife refuge in the laguna. His bill passed the House of Representatives, but died in the Senate,

tributing 30 percent of the cost.

Riggs defeated Bosco in 1990, but lost his re-election bid Nov. 3. Due to redistricting of Congressional boundaries, the laguna and Sebastopol are to be represented by Congresswoman-elect Lynn Woolsey. Although not that familiar with the corps plan, she said laguna restoration and wetlands preservation in general "fit right in with my beliefs. That will be a priority and something my office can be counted on to pursue...I'll carry the ball to the best of my ability."

Cordell of the Laguna Founda-

she said.

But, at the urging of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the corps considered the laguna purchase, as well as two other mitigation measures: along Dry Creek and in the Russian River. River residents objected to the laguna proposal, fearing creation of year-round laguna wetlands would worsen river flooding problems.