



Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation

Meanderings

Preserving and Restoring a Public Treasure for Generations to Come

Spring 2004

Foundation's Education and Restoration Programs to Grow in 2004

Generous grant support will allow the Laguna Foundation to significantly ramp up our education and restoration programs in 2004, resulting in greater public awareness of the value and uniqueness of the Laguna, a thorough plan for how the Laguna's ecological health can be reestablished, and a sense of partnership among important stakeholders for how they can work together to accomplish a healthier Laguna.

The Foundation's Docent-led Environmental Education Program for elementary students, now in its sixth year, has until now relied on volunteers for management and administration. The program has grown in popularity with teachers and students to the point that it has reached the limits of what can be accomplished without support staff. A grant from the Medtronic Corporation Foundation will fund the hiring of a part-time administrator for the program, allowing us to expand the number of children and school districts who benefit from the program each year (see story on the Education Program and how you can become a docent, p. 2)

Meanwhile, grants from the California Coastal Conservancy, Sonoma County Water Agency, City of Santa Rosa and Community Foundation Sonoma County will fund the creation of a *Laguna Ecosystem Restoration and Management Plan*: a two-year process which will create a "blueprint" for restoring and managing the Laguna as a healthy ecosystem. The RMP process will combine science and technical expertise with input from public agencies and private stakeholders to identify where each major habitat type in the Laguna should be restored, standards for restoration and habitat creation projects, appropriate management regimes for Laguna lands, and strategies for addressing the invasion of the creeping water primrose *Ludwigia*, which has exploded in the Laguna in recent years.



Foundation volunteers plant oak trees at the Laguna Uplands (Tom Lambert)

The Foundation's intent through this process is to build common ground among key stakeholders in the Laguna so that a spirit of collaboration in achieving restoration goals can be fostered. Much of the Laguna is in private hands, and only through such partnerships will the long term vision of a restored, healthy Laguna be achieved.

We're grateful to our grant funders and look forward to partnering with them in these efforts this year.

Executive Director's Report—Dan Schurman



A little over a year ago, the Laguna Foundation was being referred to as a "well-kept secret."

I don't think we can say that any more. Hundreds of new supporters have joined us in the past year, public agency heads are listening to and funding our proposals for a restored Laguna, and the long-hoped-for dream of a Laguna Learning Center seems finally to be within our reach. We've come a long way in a very short time and to all of you who've helped to

make it possible, we offer a hearty and sincere "thank you."

During the past year or so, we've bid adieu to some veteran volunteer board members, some of whom served the organization for several years. People like Kim Cordell, John Cummings, Bob Evans, Diane Test and Brian Turner worked diligently over the years to keep the dream alive while the Laguna Foundation matured into the organization that we are today, capable of not only dreaming big dreams for the Laguna, but making them a reality too. Their hard work

of yesterday is really what makes it possible for us to talk so confidently about achieving so much tomorrow.

The leadership torch has been passed to another group of dedicated board members, and I can't think of a better group of people to work with as we move ahead. In the past year, we've been fortunate to add to our board Bill Bettinelli, Susan Churchill, Katrina Dixon, Pat Kilkenny, Jim Shelton, Virginia Strom-Martin, and George Tuttle. Under the leadership of President Dan Smith and Vice-president

(see p. 2)

Become a Laguna Docent!

The Foundation’s Docent-led Environmental Education Program, now in its sixth year, trains volunteer adult docents in a ten-week course of science and cultural history, and then partners them with elementary school teachers to teach wetlands and watershed science to children in local school districts, both in the classroom and in field trips to the Laguna. The program is popular with teachers, students and parents, and provides a unique and memorable way for children to fulfill their California science curriculum requirements while experiencing the beauty and wonder of the Laguna.

Being a docent is a wonderful way to give to the community, learn more about our local environment and get out into the Laguna’s beauty. Our docents are the heart and soul of the Foundation, and their generosity of spirit and caring for the Laguna inspires us all.

The Laguna Foundation is now taking applications for our 10-week, 40-hour (total) training in the science, history and lore of the Laguna. Docents lead field trips for 3rd, 4th and 5th grade children and teach in classrooms about the wonders of the Laguna. Docents also lead nature walks and hikes for older students and adults and participate in ongoing continuing education and special nature activities.

Trainings take place Monday afternoons 12:30-4:30 from March 15 through May 24—ten weeks of training by experts in biology, natural history and environmental education.

For information and application, please call the Foundation offices or log onto our website: www.lagunadesantarosa.org.

The Foundation Information Location:
Lagunadesantarosa.org
Events, announcements, maps, information



Riparian Forest in the Laguna (Bob Evans)



Ghostly oaks after a recent rain (Ken Kinser)

Executive Director’s Report *from Page 1*

Carolyn “C.J.” Johnson, we have as fine a group of volunteers at the board level as any organization in our community. I’m excited about how much we can accomplish together.

I’d also like to thank our new volunteer webmaster, Chris Kerr, who has done such a terrific job with improving our website and keeping it up to date. Thanks, Chris!

The big news we announced last month is the grant we’ve received from the Coastal Conservancy to undertake a Restoration and Management Plan for the Laguna. As described in the story on page 1, this will lay the groundwork for our vision of a Laguna Preserve. We’re also continuing pursuit of the development of a Laguna Learning Center, specific plans for which we hope to be able to announce later this year.

Another announcement we’re excited to make is that we have just relocated our offices to downtown Santa Rosa. As much as we enjoyed being on the banks of the Laguna in Sebastopol, we’ve known for some time that we’d soon need more space and that having a presence in Santa Rosa would be valuable strategically as we work to connect with and influence residents and decision-makers in the Laguna watershed’s largest city. For too long the Laguna (and the Foundation) have been thought of as the West County’s own and while it’s true that the channel itself is closest to Sebastopol, the vast majority of the Laguna’s water and people come from the east side of the Santa Rosa Plain. We feel it’s essential for us to raise Laguna awareness among Santa Rosans if we’re to be successful in creating a Laguna Preserve that all of Sonoma County’s residents will one day be able to appreciate and enjoy. Thanks to the generosity of Foundation Board President Dan Smith, we’ll be assuming (free of charge!) the final two years on a lease for an office suite at 50 Old Courthouse Square. Come visit us when you’re downtown!

— Dan Schurman



Executive Director Dan Schurman recognizes stalwart volunteer Raini Sugg Vallarino as our Volunteer of the Year at an appreciation event in December. (Mark Green)

Caring for the Laguna...Forever.

As it is created, the Laguna Preserve at the heart of the Foundation's vision will require stewardship and care for as long as water runs from the mountains to the Russian River. As we preserve and restore properties to healthy ecological functioning, create the Laguna Learning Center, and expand public awareness and appreciation for this unique jewel of our county, the Foundation must be there to protect, enhance and educate the public about the Laguna.

That is why a growing number of our supporters are including the Foundation in their philanthropy and estate planning. Even what seems like a small bequest can make a lot of difference. Planned giving to the Foundation is a way to give to the living systems, schoolchildren and community of Sonoma County forever.

If you are planning your estate and would like to include the Foundation, we can help. The Foundation has supporters who are estate planning professionals and can provide you with information on a variety of ways you can meet your financial planning needs while helping our efforts.

Contact our offices for a copy of our brochure, *Planned Giving to the Laguna Foundation*. And thank you for considering a planned gift to the Foundation.

Become a Friend of the Laguna!



Founded in 1989, the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation works to preserve, restore, and provide opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn about the Laguna, the largest complex of freshwater wetlands on the North Coast of California.

The Foundation is a nonprofit organization supported by contributions and grants. IRS ID #94-3155180. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Clip and mail this coupon with your membership check to:

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Thank You

to our generous supporters

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...and all our generous members and volunteers!

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Tax deductible **donation** enclosed of \$ _____

I am interested in **volunteering**. Please call me for opportunities in *wildlife conservation, education and/or recreation*. (circle preferences)

Preservation Circle. I'd like to support the Laguna with a contribution of \$ _____ every quarter!



The Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation, founded in 1989, works to preserve, restore, and provide opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn about the Laguna, the largest complex of freshwater wetlands on the North Coast of California. The Foundation implements preservation and restoration projects, works with landowners and public agencies to protect and improve Laguna resources, conducts educational programs for children and adults, and works to develop appropriately managed recreational opportunities for the public to enjoy the Laguna.

The Laguna, at 14 miles in length, is the largest tributary of the Russian River, a complex of marshes, ponds, creeks, vernal pools and oak woodlands draining a 240-square-mile watershed extending from the foot of Sonoma Mountain in Cotati to Windsor and Forestville. A major stop on the Pacific Flyway for migratory waterfowl, it is home to over 200 species of birds, as well as river otter, bobcat, coyote, mountain lion, gray fox, and rare, threatened and endangered species such as steelhead trout, coho salmon, California tiger salamander and Sebastopol meadowfoam. The Laguna provides wildlife habitat, water cleansing, flood mitigation, viewsheds and urban separation in the heart of the Santa Rosa Plain.

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The Laguna Learning Center:

A community resource celebrating the Laguna



Artist's rendition by Molly Eckler

One challenge which must be met before the Laguna Preserve can be accomplished is for the general public living within its watershed to become aware of the Laguna, its uniqueness and importance.

Accordingly, the Foundation is looking for a site to create the *Laguna Learning Center*: a nature center, classroom for our education programs, offices and a place where the public can go to learn about the natural treasure in its own back yard. Depending on where it is located, the Learning Center could also serve as a trailhead for planned public trails in the Laguna.

Currently, the Foundation is applying to the Santa Rosa Board of Public Utilities, asking to be

allowed to lease a portion of the Stone Farm, a historic farm north of Occidental Road, and to rehabilitate the deteriorating buildings on the property. The 1870 farmhouse, with spectacular views of the Laguna and adjacent to planned trails, would be a perfect location for an educational gateway to the Laguna's wonders.

The Laguna Learning Center project will be a great leap forward in public visibility for the Laguna and a marvelous educational resource for the children and adults of Sonoma County. We'll need very broad participation from the community both in financial support and volunteering to make this dream a reality. *To get involved, call the Foundation offices or email mark@lagunadesantarosa.org.*