

8



City of Sebastopol

Mayor
 Patrick Slayter
City Council
 Sarah Glade Gurney,
 Vice Mayor
 John Eder
 Una Glass
 Robert Jacob

 City Manager/City
 Attorney
 Larry McLaughlin
 City Clerk
 Mary Gourley

Meeting Date:
To:
From:
Subject:
Recommendation:
Funding:

Meeting of November 3, 2015
 Mayor and City Council
 Kenyon Webster, Planning Director
 Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetlands Preserve Management Plan
 Approve Plan
 Currently Budgeted: Yes No N/A
 Net General Fund Cost:
 If Cost to Other Fund(s),

Agenda Report Reviewed by:
 City Manager/City Attorney *SM*

Introduction: Pursuant to City Council direction, a draft Laguna de Santa Rosa Preserve Management Plan has been prepared in a public process. In addition to several public workshops, the Planning Commission has served as a forum for development of the Plan. The Commission is recommending approval of the Plan, with consideration of comments made in the public process.

Pursuant to Commission direction, the consultant and staff team have reviewed comments and are recommending several revisions. The revised Plan is recommended for approval.

Background: The City's Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetlands Preserve has been created over a number of years following adoption of the 1992 Laguna Park Master Plan.

The Master Plan created a vision for protection and enhancement of the Laguna in the Sebastopol area, and guided the later creation of the Laguna Preserve. The Preserve is not intended to be an intensely developed or active recreation area; rather it is intended to focus on maintaining and restoring natural ecological functions and values, with some low-impact public access.

The primary purpose of the Preserve is not to meet human needs; rather it is focused on protection and restoration of natural functions. A secondary focus is provision of low-impact public access.

The Preserve has been developed in multiple stages on several distinct properties beginning in 1998, transforming areas once used for waste disposal (a City dump; a sewage treatment plant; an apple waste disposal area) into a valued 'natural' public park. Thousands of native trees and shrubs have been planted, and several miles of trails developed.

The Preserve includes the following City-owned lands:

- Areas surrounding the Laguna Youth Park/Community Center/Youth Annex
- Areas west of the Laguna channel and east of Morris Street, behind (in some cases) private property fronting on Morris Street
- Meadowlark Field, north of Highway 12 on the east side of the Laguna channel
- The City's newest park, Tomodachi Park, next door to the Village Mobile Home site
- The Railroad Forest, located north of the Joe Rodota Trail

The City developed the Preserve with a combination of local funding, volunteers, and grants from numerous sources. Several major grants have been received, including from the California Coastal Conservancy, State Parks, and the Wildlife Conservation Board.

A major funding partner was the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, which helped the City purchase the Railroad Forest and Tomodachi Park properties, provided a major restoration grant at Meadowlark Field, and provided substantial funding for construction of Tomodachi Park.

Conservation easements were recorded to protect the values of lands where the District provided the City with financial assistance. The City is obligated to maintain these values.

After expressing some concerns about implementation of a volunteer project at the Railroad Forest property, the District asked the City to prepare a management plan to set forth its protocols for maintenance, restoration and improvement of the properties with District easements. As the Laguna Preserve sites without such easements have the same environmental and management issues, the Management Plan also encompasses those properties.

As detailed in the draft Plan and in public comment, there are issues regarding maintenance, invasive species, public access, appropriate improvements, illegal camping, lack of identity, insufficient connectivity, and appropriate restoration/improvement protocols.

As the Preserve has been in operation for a number of years, the City Council felt that it would be appropriate to undertake a comprehensive review of conditions, needs, and opportunities. Using Special Sales tax monies, the City Council set aside funding in this year's budgeting to prepare a Laguna Preserve Management Plan. After a competitive selection process, Prunuske Chatham and subcontractor the Laguna Foundation were retained to prepare the Plan.

Project objectives include:

- Inventory and describe the Preserve properties including all natural habitats and human infrastructure;
- Summarize existing City plans and policies relating to the Preserve;
- Summarize other applicable regulations;
- Summarize existing restrictions applying to Preserve properties, such as Open Space easements;
- Identify issues and opportunities for restoration/enhancement and public access;
- Identify target condition of properties;
- Set forth best management practices for resource management and erosion control;
- Identify maintenance needs;
- Set forth protocols for improvements, such as native plant restoration projects and trails;
- Provide a general framework for monitoring, preserving, protecting, improving, and maintaining Preserve resources;

- Describe the City's long-term plan for on-going management;
- Identify appropriate elements of an on-going maintenance program;
- Provide estimates of annual staffing and budgeting needs.

The public process to date has included a presentation to the Planning Commission, an initial public workshop to identify issues and receive public input, and a 'walking workshop' to gather further input. Information about the Plan has been provided in the City newsletter, and in widely-distributed bulletins to interested persons and organizations. There has also been outreach to regulatory and other agencies, and technical revisions were included in the draft Plan in response to some agency comments.

A major intent of the Plan is to determine if the City should consider different maintenance protocols, and/or budget additional resources. While in a number of cases jurisdictions may have funding for capital improvements, provision of on-going maintenance resources is sometimes lacking. Often, long-term maintenance needs are insufficiently appreciated. The Plan indicates that additional maintenance resources are needed to appropriately maintain the Preserve. This is a budget consideration for the City Council.

Grant Application: There has been a dearth of grant opportunities for park projects until recently. A major, time-sensitive opportunity was identified with the River Parkways grant program, and using information developed in the draft Plan, City and Laguna Foundation staff collaborated on a grant proposal for nearly \$500,000 to fund Preserve restoration, interpretive and wayfinding signs, and the connectivity improvements identified in the draft Plan. The application is pending.

Environmental Review: The proposed use is categorically exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to Section 15307, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for the Protection of Natural Resources, in that the primary intent of the Plan is protection of natural resources; and Section 15301, Existing Facilities, in that the Plan is addressing an existing public park, and also identifies minor restoration and trail improvement projects (while not implementing such projects).

Public Comment: Appendix 7 in the Plan provides detailed comments that were provided through the initial outreach process. An attachment to this report summarizes comments from the 'walking workshop.'

Also attached are the minutes of the Planning Commission's hearing on the Plan, and comments submitted to the Commission at that time. Other public comments have also been provided for the Council's consideration.

Analysis: Below is staff's analysis regarding some of the major issues raised in the public process.

Objective of Preserve. Some comments express the opinion that human needs and improvements should receive higher priority. Per the 1992 Laguna Park Plan, the intent, or policy purpose of the Preserve is restoration and protection of the natural Laguna environment—with human access/improvements minimized, or secondary.

As stated in the 1992 Master Plan: "The main focus of the Laguna de Santa Rosa Park is Laguna environments preservation and restoration..." This principle has guided development of the Management Plan. Low impact public access and education is an appropriate element in the Preserve, but is intended to be secondary to protection and restoration of natural features.

At times in the Preserve's history it has been a challenge to maintain the Preserve's values and objectives when there are legitimate 'improvement' ideas that may serve other needs. The line between appropriate and inappropriate improvements is not always clear, but is guided by the Park Master Plan, by the City's own history of improvements, and by guidance from the Open Space District and regulatory agencies. Based on these considerations, some concepts, such as removing natural vegetation to uncover railroad tracks, place a rail car in the area, eliminate native plants such as poison oak, or to remove vegetation or logs provide kayak access, are not recommended.

Himalayan Blackberry Removal. Some comments suggested this is not a priority in the Plan. However, Himalayan blackberry is listed in the Plan as one of the top priority invasive species for removal throughout the Preserve, including Railroad Forest. Its removal is called out as a key component of Restoration Opportunities B (Youth Park Northwest Corner), E (Youth Park Southwest Corner), F (AmeriCorps Trail near Lift Station), and G (Railroad Forest).

Public Access. Some comments suggested the Plan does not provide adequate public access. As noted, the primary purpose of the Preserve is environmental protection and restoration; modest, low-impact access is also appropriate, but should be limited. Improved public access to the Preserve is addressed in a number of ways, including the proposed addition of two new connector trails. See Section 8, pp. 64-72.

Public Input/Plan proposals. A comment suggested that the Plan did not adequately reflect the range of public input, particularly ideas for additional improvements. As noted, the Management Plan is guided by, and intended to maintain the vision of the Laguna Park Master Plan. Some ideas for improvements that were expressed in the public process would be in conflict with this vision and thus were not included in the recommended Plan. It is also noted that in prior public meetings, some other members of the public felt that no such improvements should be made, and that perhaps existing access should be further restricted to protect the natural areas.

Open Space District easements. Where they have provided funding for land acquisition, restoration, or improvements, the District is dedicated to maintain the conservation values of the subject property. The District requires permanent easements to restrict uses and improvements, and conducts annual property inspections, and also is required to review improvement proposals. The District rightly takes these responsibilities seriously, and has effective authority to deny project proposals. Certain volunteer activities in the Railroad Forest were of significant concern to the District as being in possible conflict with the District's view of conservation values, and were part of the reason why the District asked that the City develop a management plan for how affected properties should be maintained and improved.

Other Comments. Some comments with technical information or corrections were received; the City's consultants will review these and make appropriate revisions to the final Plan.

Maintenance Needs. One purpose of the Plan was to review maintenance needs. Long-term maintenance is often the most challenging element for parks and other public facilities. Typically, there are no grant programs that fund maintenance, and generally, most maintenance activities do not inspire ongoing volunteer contributions, while some maintenance activities are not suitable for volunteers. The Plan indicates that there are substantial unmet maintenance needs. Appendix 8 estimates the Preserve should have a budget of approximately \$155,000 for maintenance, training, and coordination. Current resources devoted to the Preserve are substantially less than this amount. If the Plan is adopted, staff will review the Plan and make funding proposals in the FY 2016-17 budget process.

Revisions to draft Plan. City staff and the consultant team reviewed public and Commissioner input provided at the Planning Commission hearing and are recommending a number of revisions to the draft Plan. A summary of these issues is provided in an attachment, and an updated version of the Plan includes recommended revisions.

Key Issues: Key issues include:

- Whether Plan has sufficient information about Preserve resources, issues, and opportunities
- Whether the planned restoration and improvement projects are appropriate, and whether additional improvements should be considered
- Whether the Council has any comments on the estimates of maintenance needs

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Council receive any public comment, discuss the draft Plan, and adopt the Plan. If the Council desires revisions, specific direction is requested.

Attachments:

Planning Commission meeting summary comments/responses
Planning Commission minutes

Written comments
Revised Draft Plan

Laguna Wetlands Preserve Restoration and Management Plan Input from Planning Commission Meeting (10/13/15) and Proposed Edits to Plan	
Planning Commission Input	
Input	PCI Response
Interest in greater public access	Plan increases public access by adding two new trails, increasing utilization of the two most underutilized parts of the Preserve which are already developed for public access: Tomodachi Park and Americorps Trail. L Deedler has suggested a trail alongside Calder Creek, as well as clearing the railroad tracks as a trail, also along the creek. These would both add substantially to fragmentation of already limited, sensitive riparian habitat and decrease wildlife use. Informal public access is not discouraged in the Plan, and will in fact be increased by restoration/blackberry removal. An informal trail already exists along Calder east of the bridge. Also, team has received substantial public input that more access is not desired.
Interest in improved kayak access from Preserve.	Complex channel and dense vegetation make it very difficult to kayak from the Preserve up- or downstream. Informal kayak access is possible and occasionally used. CDFW owns the channel through the Preserve, except at Tomodachi, so clearing vegetation could only be done with their cooperation or leadership. PCI's opinion is that this is unlikely as vegetation provides valuable shade and habitat for wildlife and water quality, and for Ludwigia suppression. Simply providing a kayak launch at the Preserve but not addressing channel passability would be possible but may not be an effective use of City funds. As noted in Plan, kayak access available at Occidental Road.
Consider grates on Calder Creek culverts to reduce flow of trash into creek	Grates are already present just above Preserve at Ives Park. These are likely open in wet season to prevent back-ups/flooding, and closed only in dry season if at all. Since most trash movement will occur in wet season, other approaches to trash management are likely to be more effective: ensure that trash and recycling containers are available throughout Preserve, and reduce camping (see Plan), which is by far the largest source of trash in Preserve.
Show potential cost savings from working with volunteers on restoration projects.	Team has already developed and will provide.
Show costs for restoration of all quadrants of RR Forest	Team will provide.
	Proposed Changes to Plan Team proposes adding bench at Railroad Forest near creek, SW of bridge. An additional bench could be considered further downstream under boxelders in conjunction with restoration of that area. These would provide public a chance to walk into the habitat from the existing paved trails, without creating extensive lengthwise fragmentation. Team does not recommend an additional formal trail along Calder Creek. Preserve improvements will require review by SCAPOSD.
	Team recommends no change, but will await further guidance from City. Preserve improvements would require additional consultation with SCAPOSD and regulatory agencies. Team will note that the Occidental Rd launch is on the Occidental Road Wetlands Transfer property owned in fee by SCAPOSD and maintained by Regional Parks.
	Team recommends adding sturdy trash and recycling containers (to match those at other Preserve locations) at RR Forest.
	Team has already developed and will provide.
	Team will provide.

Input	PCI Response	Proposed Changes to Plan
Further develop recommendations for highlighting archaeological information about the site.		Team will add/emphasize the following opportunities: include archaeological information in entry arbor displays (including, as already noted, displays created by local students); in the open-air structure/interpretive kiosk described as an option for Youth Park; and in guided walks of the Preserve.
Emphasize the value to community of trail access under Highway 12 at the Laguna, indicate intention to develop if possible.		Team will strengthen existing language.
Concern about ticks in Preserve		Team will strengthen existing language to emphasize importance of City cutting vegetation back from trail edges. Signage could encourage visitors to dress appropriately in tick season.
Consider restoring all of Railroad Forest at once rather than in phases.	The purpose of recommended phasing is to: avoid denuding large areas at once, lessen impacts to wildlife, lessen erosion control concerns, spread out costs, and keep City maintenance tasks at a manageable level. Preference is given to restoring a smaller area thoroughly and well, rather than spreading resources thin and addressing a large area less effectively.	Team recommends no change, but will await further guidance from City. Preserve improvements would require input from SCAPOSD.
Interest in getting rid of all Himalayan blackberry.	Already identified as a high priority species for removal, and key component of multiple restoration recommendations. Time frame is only limited by funding/labor availability.	Team recommends no change.
Consider prioritizing recommended actions.	Actions already shown as short-term (should be completed within 2 years), long-term (implementation recommended within 10 years), or ongoing. If some actions are described as lower priority, they may be harder to acquire grant funding for.	Team recommends no change, but will await further guidance from City.
Clarify that removal of embedded garbage is possible with permits in place.		Team will clarify.
Define active and passive recreation		Team will address/clarify.
Remove poison oak throughout Preserve? Remove mention of poison oak as barrier planting for unwanted informal trails	Poison oak serves ecological functions of value (e.g., wildlife habitat and forage, erosion control, preventing human access where undesired), so complete removal of poison oak from the Preserve is not recommended in general, but along trails, can be kept trimmed back.	Team will remove recommendation for using poison oak as a barrier planting, and will emphasize that poison oak should be cut back from trails during regular trail maintenance, along with other overhanging vegetation.

Input	PCI Response	Proposed Changes to Plan
<p>Public Input</p> <p>Not enough detail in Plan. In particular, regarding blackberry removal and Tomodachi connector trail development.</p>	<p>In addition to the Invasive Species table referenced, an additional four pages of the plan address invasive species as a whole, and much of this is directly applicable to Himalayan blackberry. Invasive recommendations are designed to be of sufficient detail for City landscape staff or contractor with vegetation management experience to be able to carry out tasks, and PCI feels this level of detail is provided.</p>	<p>Team will add information on potential equipment to use, timing, and guidance for working around downed wood and living trees.</p>
<p>In response to above, another speaker noted: Tomodachi connector trail proposed route is likely the best and will be relatively straightforward, based on personal trail design experience. Sonoma County Trail Council could work on the project. Could route the trail slightly differently to ease the transition up to the Rodota Trail embankment, or to go closer to Laguna.</p>	<p>Tomodachi connector trail route shown on Figure 6 was mapped in the field by walking the apparent best route, which would avoid crossing any channels and minimize habitat impacts by selecting the shortest route. Surface is relatively level, and no surface treatments are recommended. Slight adjustments may be possible. Key components of this trail development would be permitting, flagging of final layout, trimming of overhead willows, and mowing or grubbing in meadow area. The only slightly technical component is the connection with the Rodota Trail, where new trail would need to climb the berm of the Rodota Trail.</p>	<p>Team will add this information to text.</p>
<p>Increase visibility of Americorps Trail</p>		<p>No change - already addressed in Plan.</p>
<p>Add signage to "overlook"</p>		<p>No change - already addressed in Plan.</p>
<p>Use goats to manage blackberry</p>		<p>No change - already addressed as one option in Plan.</p>
<p>Use herbicides to manage blackberry.</p>		<p>Not recommended in Plan based on City policy and viable alternatives.</p>
<p>Engage public in the history and prehistory of the site. Response from another attendee: Opportunities to do so via docent-led walks are already present with Sebastopol Walks, Cittaslow, and the Historical Society; don't necessarily need signage or added infrastructure at Preserve.</p>	<p>Signage re history already recommended, as is further engagement of kids and teens. 1000 children already visit Preserve annually with LF and learn about history and ecology.</p>	<p>See item 11 above. Team also proposes adding signage on Railroad Forest bridge that very briefly welcomes visitors to the Preserve, explains ecological context, and mentions historic and prehistoric human uses of area. Team will emphasize opportunities to engage with schools and encouraging community pride as a way to foster stewardship. Team proposes developing and providing pamphlets/info about Preserve at Museum, other public places.</p>

Input	PCI Response	Proposed Changes to Plan
<p>Expose railroad track through Preserve for people to walk along.</p>	<p>Track will likely be exposed during proposed blackberry removal from that area, and available informally for exploration. Eventually, native plantings may again overtake it. Regular removal of native vegetation from tracks and encouraging use as a trail will further fragment the riparian habitat, reducing value for wildlife.</p>	<p>Allow for uncovering of trail as part of site restoration. Allow for casual public use without encouraging heavy public use. Improvements to the Preserve will require SCAPOSD review.</p>
<p>Regrade Calder Creek channel to make it more gentle and accessible.</p>	<p>No clear ecological benefits to this; creek is not deeply incised here, sediment deposition occurs naturally, and creek floods regularly. Historic condition could have been a more braided channel, but given constraints of buildings, parking, Railroad Forest Trail, bridge, and Rodota Trail nearby, opportunities are limited without risking infrastructure damage or heavy maintenance needs, and resulting in decreased public accessibility. Design, permitting, and construction could be costly. Minor handwork could be accomplished more easily. For public accessibility, the south side of the creek just upstream of the bridge is already readily accessible and visited.</p>	<p>Team proposes adding: Highlight gentle area of creek by the bridge with a bench and signage at the bridge welcoming visitors to the Preserve. Team does not recommend grading of creek channel, but will await further guidance from City. Reshaping of channel would require review from SCAPOSD, CDFW, RWQCB. Opportunities could exist for gentle grading of tops of steep slopes during blackberry removal. Erosion protection would need to be applied immediately. Benefits aesthetic and not ecological.</p>
<p>Other proposed edits to Plan</p>		<p>Team proposes calling for enhancement of Youth Park entry arbor areas with native shrubs, perennials, and grasses appropriate to the habitat. At the southern Youth Park arbor, this will involve coordinating with Adopt-a-Landscape participant.</p>



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UNAPPROVED DRAFT MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
MINUTES OF OCTOBER 13, 2015
YOUTH ANNEX
425 MORRIS STREET, SEBASTOPOL

PLANNING COMMISSION:

1. CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Chair Doyle, Commissioners Fernandez, Douch, Jacob, Pinto

Absent: Vice Chair Kelley (excused), Commissioner Stegeman

Staff: Kenyon Webster, Planning Director, Jonathan Atkinson, Assistant Planner

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: July 28, 2015

Commissioner Fernandez made a motion to approve the minutes as amended.

Commissioner Jacob seconded the motion.

Vote: Ayes: Commissioners Fernandez, Jacob, Pinto, Douch
 Noes: None
 Abstain: Chair Doyle

4. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC REGARDING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA: There were none.

5. STATEMENTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None.

6. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT (Update on Future Agendas, Actions of Other Boards and City Council.

Planning Director Kenyon Webster provided the following updates:

- A Laguna cleanup event would be conducted on October 17 from 9am to 12pm
- Vice Chair Kelley would be absent tonight due to a work conflict
- The Peace Wall was dedicated on October 11
- At the next Council meeting, the Council is expected to approve the formula business ordinance and will also discuss a potential Community Impact Report requirement
- The next meeting of the Commission will be October 27, with two Variances and one Use Permit on the agenda
- There will be a General Plan 'open house' meeting on November 19 to provide an opportunity for the public to comment on GPAC policies
- Several Commissioner terms are expiring and the City will be announcing an application period

CONSENT CALENDAR (PUBLIC HEARING IF REQUESTED): None.

8. PUBLIC HEARING: None.

9. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- A. PROPOSED LAGUNA DE SANTA ROSA WETLANDS PRESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN** – A draft Management Plan has been developed for the City's Laguna Preserve, a public park area intended to preserve and restore areas of the Laguna de Santa Rosa ecosystem and allow for low-intensity public access. The Plan is intended to provide information on resources, needs, and opportunities, and guide maintenance, improvement, and management of the Preserve over time.

Director Webster presented the staff report. Joan Schwan, from the City's consultant Prunuske Chatham, provided an overview of the draft Plan.

Commissioners asked questions of the consultant team and staff, including:

- Some of the recommendations appear preliminary; are there further studies or costs to implement?
- Is the Railroad Forest restoration item only for one quadrant?
- Could costs be reduced via use of volunteers?
- Would like further definition of the concept of 'limited public access' from the 1992 Master Plan
- Is there more or on-going care needed to prior restoration plantings?
- Regarding illegal camping, what did agencies indicate regarding enforcement of existing laws? Are illegal campers provided with information about housing or other resources?
- What is the best practice for removal of garbage or debris that may be embedded? What can be done about educating people about trash? Could grates be used to capture garbage before it gets to the Laguna?
- What are the costs of not implementing this Plan?
- What is status of annexation of the Village Park/Tomodachi Park property?
- Should efforts be made to control Poison Oak plants?

Joan Schwan, Hattie Brown of the Laguna Foundation, and Director Webster responded:

- Project descriptions and costs estimates are intended to be sufficient to implement, and include the cost of preparation of specific restoration or construction plans.
- The approach taken to the Railroad Forest work was intended to be incremental, given the scope of the work needed.
- Some cost savings might be possible through use of volunteers, but it is not realistic that volunteers could do most of the work. A column could be added to show possible volunteer-assisted costs.
- Limited public access is subject to interpretation; the goal is to protect ecological functions; consideration of comments and guidance from the Open Space District, which has conservation easements over some properties, is also informative.
- Generally previous plantings need minimal care; usually plantings receive three years of maintenance, then are on their own. However monitoring is appropriate.
- The consultants did consult with the Police Department, which does period sweeps for illegal camping and has a protocol for working with campers, including provision of information about assistance resources.
- Most trash is likely from illegal campers, but some comes from City storm drains. The City does periodically provide campers with trash bags, and place trash cans in some areas. Removal of embedded debris can sometimes be an issue in terms of water quality impacts. A programmatic permit approval can help with sanctioning this type of activity.
- Grates can help catch debris, but would create a maintenance issue, and generally cannot be in place except in low-flow seasons.
- If the Plan is not implemented, the City risks not complying with Open Space conservation easements, or regulatory agency actions. Conservation values of the lands would decline; public enjoyment of the Preserve would decline.
- Village Park/Tomodachi Park annexation is expected to commence in the next year.
- Poison Oak is a native plant that provides habitat and is a food source, so its eradication would be inappropriate. However it should be controlled along trails.

Chair Doyle opened the item for public comment.

- Lynn Deedler commented that the Laguna Preserve is a City treasure; glad to see the Plan; but he has many criticisms of it, and it would short-change the community to see it adopted. Projects lack detail, such as the Tomodachi-Joe Rodota trail connector—there are several possible routes. There is also a lack of detail regarding Himalayan blackberry control.
- Michael S. stated he was new to the Laguna, but has grown to appreciate it. He stated there is a trash problem, and he has had difficulty accessing the area by canoe. He stated the Laguna creates a City identity and sense of place; better public access should be provided; informational signs about the history should be provided; more maintenance is needed, such as the overlook deck on Morris Street; he has a company that does cleanup work and would be happy to help.
- Nancy Preblich said she owned property on Calder Creek; integrated, managed grazing such as by goats can be part of an appropriate part of maintenance, such as managing blackberries.
- Unidentified person asked for more definition of 'low impact public access' and stated more public access is appropriate and would create more knowledge and support. He said plans for blackberries were not realistic, but that Garlon 4 herbicide seems effective; and that it would be desirable to have a trail crossing under the Highway 12 bridge.

- Helen Shane provided historical background on the Laguna Foundation and the Art Workshop and commented that there is a need to let people experience nature, that more passive-use public access would be good, such as trails or some kayak access.
- An unidentified person stated she was an anthropology instructor at SRJC, and she supported the concept of building a sense of place, and to engage the community to greater degree regarding local history. She suggested creation of audio tours, pamphlets, and other mechanisms.
- Geoffrey Skinner noted he was married to one of the consultants and thus was fairly familiar with the work done; he commented about prior comments that the Tomodachi-Rodota Trail was not specific enough. He indicated that the route in the proposed Plan was based on field analysis, and appeared to be most simple and direct route, and was at an appropriate level of detail, but that other routes were possible. He stated some costs could be reduced via use of volunteers, such as the Sonoma County Trails Council. He stated people could work with Cittaslow, the Historical Society and Sebastopol Walks to help create web-based audio tours.

Chair Doyle closed public comment and asked for Commission questions or comments.

Commissioner Pinto suggested the Commission provide the Council with public and Commissioner comments, and forward the Plan to the Council. He commented that blackberry removal involves a multi-year, ongoing and intensive effort. He stated he is supportive of kayak access; but acknowledges agency and ecological concerns. He also asked if there are actions that could address tick issues.

Joan Schwan responded that good trail maintenance is key, since people tend to pick up ticks by brushing against vegetation to the sides of trails, or overhead.

Commissioner Jacob asked the consultants if the Plan needed more detail on planned improvements.

Joan Schwan and Liza Prunuske responded that the improvements were based on detailed site-specific analysis and while implementation would need more specifics such as a precise planting plan, the level of detail provided was appropriate for a planning-level document. They also noted that some comments contending that the Plan did not address certain topics such as blackberry control were not accurate. They also noted that in the course of public outreach, there were comments that public access should actually be reduced in favor of the natural environment; and also noted that relative to clearing or other improvements for kayak access, the Laguna channel is not owned by the City.

Commissioner Jacob asked if the cost table could be augmented with a column showing how some work by volunteers might reduce costs.

Ms. Schwan responded that information could be included. Director Webster commented that there are limits to the kinds of tasks that volunteers can be expected to accomplish.

Commissioner Jacob asked about prevailing wage requirements.

Director Webster responded that public work project are required to pay prevailing wages, and this does raise costs by 30-40 percent or more.

Helen Shane interjected that perhaps there are grants that should be explored.

Ms. Prunuske concurred that there are currently several potential grant programs that could be provide one-time funding, but there aren't programs for ongoing maintenance.

Commissioner Jacob asked about any recommendation to naturalize Calder Creek.

Ms. Schwan commented that while naturalizing in Ives Park would be expensive it would have ecological benefits. She stated that within the Preserve, the creek is functioning like a natural creek and there would not be substantial benefit to modifying it, and that this would also add cost.

Commissioner Fernandez commented that people are scared to go into some areas that have high vegetation; that trash and debris may clog up waterways; that areas should be opened up/made visible. He stated he would like to see changes in the Plan before it goes to the Council. Regarding blackberries in the Railroad Forest, he would like to see a bigger area addressed, and that we can learn from how blackberries were handled elsewhere. He expressed some concern about the City's ability to maintain the Preserve and enforce rules. He suggested a partnership with schools. He expressed support for kayak options, but acknowledges challenges. He said there was a need to be able to go on a trail from the Joe Rodota Trail and cross Highway 12.

Commissioner Douch stated this is an excellent management plan, with lots of detail. He stated the level of detail for improvements was appropriate for a planning document. He supported identification of cost of full Railroad Forest restoration work. He stated the camping the littering problems would be reduced if invasives were better controlled. He expressed support of expanding public use/access. He stated maintenance is expensive and difficult, and maintenance costs should be highlighted. He stated sections on public access and management could be developed more. He expressed general concern with the cost of implementation, and that without resources (staff and funding) the Plan could be unrealistic.

Chair Doyle stated that the Plan should make a formal recommendation for a pathway under the Highway 12 bridge.

Hattie Brown responded that there is a lot of public interest in this, but that Caltrans was not willing to include such a feature in its bridge project.

Director Webster stated the City, Laguna Foundation, and County Parks had all supported the idea, and agreed the Plan should highlight this objective.

Chair Doyle asked if water quality was adequate for swimming.

Ms. Schwan responded that there are bacterial issues.

Chair Doyle expressed general agreement with other Commissioner comments; he stated there are limitations created by regulatory agencies; he stated fallen trees are part of nature; he noted that some areas such as the creek fronting Tomodachi Park had a lot of trash and debris; he stated that Calder Creek in the project area would be much less expensive to work on than Calder Creek in Ives Park; and that it would be aesthetically nice to open up creek access, but that he understood the ecological concerns. He expressed support for blackberry removal.

Chair Doyle reopened the hearing for public comment.

- Lynn Deedler stated several things were left out of the Plan, such as uncovering old railroad tracks. He stated the first 250 yards of Calder Creek should be worked on.
- An unidentified person stated he was miffed by lack of access to the Laguna; and that a Class 1 bike trail would be great.

Chair Doyle brought the matter back for Commission deliberation, making a motion to forward the Plan to the Council with minutes and Commissioner comments.

Commissioner Jacob seconded the motion, but asked if more prioritization was needed for proposed projects?

Director Webster and Ms. Brown responded that grant projects are opportunistic and it is good to have a comprehensive list that can be adapted to fit a grant program.

Wendy Trowbridge of the Laguna Foundation noted it is very hard to find grants for maintenance.

Commissioner Douch suggested the motion be rephrased to recommend adoption of the Plan with consideration of the comments made.

Commissioner Fernandez stated he would like to see proposed revisions.

Chair Doyle asked the Commission if they wanted to have revisions come back.

Commissioner Douch stated the minutes should provide the Council with a good idea of comments, and he would not need revisions to come back to the Commission.

Chair Doyle expressed agreement; he suggested that perhaps staff could email the Commission a summary of comments and a list of proposed changes prior to the Council hearing.

Commissioner Jacob expressed agreement with moving forward.

Chair Doyle revised his motion to include the language suggested by Commissioner Douch, to forward the Plan to the Council with support for adoption of the Plan and with consideration of comments.

Commissioner Jacob as seconder agreed.

The motion was unanimously approved.

- B. DRAFT DOWNTOWN DESIGN STANDARDS** – A City Council subcommittee has drafted proposed Downtown Design Standards to set forth urban design requirements in the CD District and a portion of the M District. The Commission is asked to provide its comments on the draft Standards for consideration by the Design Review Board and City Council.

Chair Doyle expressed concern about the late hour and how much the Commission could accomplish tonight. He suggested a staff report, and then general Commissioner comments.

Director Webster provided a staff report, noting that a subcommittee member had requested that it be noted that the draft was a starting point, and it was understood that it would evolve in the review process.

Bill Lipp

thank you for emailing the
planning commission staff report.

OF THE DRAFT LAGUNA PRESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN
there are a few things in it that i would like
to address:

1. more than once mentioned is LOW
IMPACT PUBLIC ACCESS, even
though that is not clearly defined.
i agree with it if we look at the laguna as
a whole, but i think that objective could
and should include low-impact ~~access~~ ACCESS FOR
pedestrian ~~access~~ and ~~access~~ for ~~ways~~ WAYB &
kayaks close to town. if we make the
laguna more accessible >>> people will
learn and know more about the laguna
and consequently also CARE MORE
about it. let us make access to the
laguna more local.

2. removal of blackberries

“managed goat grazing or removal of roots by hand or machinery”

does not seem to be suggested by someone who had to deal with that in the past, trust me. goats eat pretty much everything, good and blackberries. and pulling out roots, that grow underneath other, good and desirable roots is pretty much impossible. i think something like GARLON 4 seems most reasonable. — removal of above ground branches should be done very early in the year.

3. it would be desirable to have a connection between the southern and the northern part. having that connection under the hwy12 bridge makes a lot of sense.

From: **Peter Schurch** redpencil@pacbell.net
Subject: Names for the 5 new Laguna parks
Date: October 20, 2015 at 7:20 AM
To: kwebster@cityofsebastopol.org



Hi Kenyon,

I hope that this is not too late to submit for consideration. Let me know if you need this in another format.

I believe the City's new parks have tentative names. But they seem rather uninspired to me. I would like to propose using Pomo names for the parks. That would link them to the past and the people who once thrived here for thousands of years but are now nearly gone. I got the names from the Pomo dictionary:

<http://northernpomolanguagetools.com/>

Here are the City's suggested names:

Tomodachi Park
Meadowlark Field,
Youth Annex Park,
Americorp Trail Park,
Railroad Forest Park

Here are some possible Pomo names and translations:

xam **heart**

kayan **duck**

shadodo **owl**

silet **skunk**

kawi ho **little child**

jishil **meadowlark**

kadokadoma **roll around in the dirt**

lum sticker briar

xamitin lake

bishe deer

dakalak rat

shacham live oak

yowsha salmon

mitulu lizard

winowa friend

shu u na go crazy

chumat grey squirrel

mituyeho poison oak

dako pounding rock

Tsinta mana How are you?

From: Edward [<mailto:ewillie44@aol.com>]
Sent: Saturday, October 17, 2015 7:38 AM
To: Peter Schurch
Subject: Re: Hi Sandy from Peter

Sorry but I don't speak Pomo. There are sources and dictionaries floating around. And also even sources where you can original names of places. I don't have those sources immediately handy. I would do a google search.
Good luck

On Oct 16, 2015, at 2:29 PM, Peter Schurch <redpencil@pacbell.net> wrote:

Hi Edward,
I would like your help in finding names for the five new parks in Sebastopol which will face the Laguna. The City currently proposes to use the names:

Tomodachi Park
Meadowlark Field,
Youth Annex Park,
Americorp Trail Park,
Railroad Forest Park.

I would like to propose appropriate Pomo names for the parks. Do you have any suggestions for beautiful Pomo names that could be used for the parks? They could be place names, names of trees, creeks or animals or

The City Council will approve the recommendations from the Planning Commission early November so there is not a lot of time to make the proposals

NOVEMBER SO THERE IS NOT A LOT OF TIME TO MAKE THE PROPOSALS.

Here is that draft management plan:

http://ci.sebastopol.ca.us/sites/default/files/jatkinson/laguna_wetlands_preserve_-_restoration_and_management_plan_draft_09.03.15.pdf

Thanks---Peter

From: Sandy Eastoak [mailto:sandoak@sonic.net]
Sent: Tuesday, October 13, 2015 11:10 AM
To: Peter Schurch
Cc: Edward Willie
Subject: Re: Hi Sandy from Peter

Hi Peter,

I don't have a phone number. His email is ewillie44@aol.com.

I hope to contact him myself, and invite his input. I'd put him in charge of all Laguna decisions, if I could, but imagine he'd prefer to be free.

Blessings,
Sandy

On Oct 13, 2015, at 8:57 AM, Peter Schurch wrote:

Hi Sandy,

I wasn't able to connect with Edward Willie on Facebook. Do you have a phone number by any chance?

Peter

From: Peter Schurch [mailto:redpencil@pacbell.net]
Sent: Monday, October 12, 2015 5:07 PM
To: 'Sandy Eastoak'
Subject: FW: Hi Sandy from Peter

The document to look at is the draft management plan

http://ci.sebastopol.ca.us/sites/default/files/jatkinson/laguna_wetlands_preserve_-_restoration_and_management_plan_draft_09.03.15.pdf

From: Peter Schurch [mailto:redpencil@pacbell.net]
Sent: Monday, October 12, 2015 4:38 PM
To: 'sandoak@sonic.net'

Subject: Hi Sandy from Peter

Hi Sandy,

I notice that the City will be opening 5 new parks in Sebastopol. I would like to suggest that they name the parks after these native names but I don't know if it would be supported by the local tribes. What do you think? There is a meeting tomorrow night about it at the Planning Commission.

Batinklehcawi, the village nearest Sebastopol

Kohnomtara, people on the west side of the Laguna;

Bitakcomtara, people on the east side of the Laguna;

--

You received this message because you are subscribed to the Google Groups "Sebastopol Creek Stewards" group.

To unsubscribe from this group and stop receiving emails from it, send an email to seba-creeks+unsubscribe@googlegroups.com.

To post to this group, send email to seba-creeks@googlegroups.com.

Visit this group at <http://groups.google.com/group/seba-creeks>.

For more options, visit <https://groups.google.com/d/optout>.

From: **Marcia & Ralph Johnson** owlsnesttwo@att.net
Subject: The Laguna Wetlands Preserve Management Plan
Date: October 5, 2015 at 7:11 PM
To: kwebster@cityofsebastopol.org



Hi Kenyon:

I finally finished reading this very impressive plan (though not every word). It is just great & I hope lots of ideas can be implemented. My comments:

- In (at least) 3 places, Barn Swallows were said to be nesting on the Community Building....should be CLIFF SWALLOWS...pgs 45, 78, 117
- I was not familiar with the Native American Names in Cultural Area Pg. 37: With the Laguna Docents we refer to native Americans as Pomo & Coast Miwok
- On Cunningham Marsh, we have been fairly successful, though no in-depth studies have been done, with removing Him. Blackberry & replacing with Juncus. I can get more information if it is needed

Again, thanks for all the hard work by a lot of people. I will try to make the meeting on Oct. 13th.

Regards,

:) Marcia (Johnson) - an original & still Active Laguna Keeper.

owlsnesttwo@att.net

From: **Rick Coates** rcoates@sonic.net
Subject: Laguna Management Plan
Date: October 6, 2015 at 5:05 PM
To: kwebster@cityofsebastopol.org



The Laguna Management Plan should include plans to naturalize Calder Creek from its conjunction with the Laguna to Petaluma Ave. The banks need to be sloped back and the blackberries removed.

Rick Coates
Executive Director
EcoRing
Promoting EcoTourism and Green Travel.
It's the Journey not the Destination!

707-632-6070 or rcoates@sonic.net

Please consider the environment before printing this email.

From: LynnDeedier lynndeed@sonic.net
Subject: Suggestions submitted
Date: October 7, 2015 at 8:09 PM
To: Kenyon Webster kwebster@cityofsebastopol.org



Of these 16 suggestion only blackberry removal acknowledged and only superficially

A beautiful environment for Sebastopol, south of the Hwy 12 bridge

It is said that all great towns rest on a significant body of water. Sebastopol is no exception. We are fortunate to have the Laguna channel through the most beautiful part of the Laguna that is right at the town's doorstep. It is unfortunate that we have not taken care of it. The setting and waterway has such great potential. Lets hope this process is a beginning of making this area in to a beautiful natural environment – even a community showpiece.

This area is a gateway to our town in one direction, and a gateway to the Laguna in he other – a prominent location that can affect how the feel about our town and how we value the Laguna. It is a ten minute walk from the town core that can take you into a completely different natural environment. Our community relishes and needs such places to walk, ride bikes, explore, kayak, play in a creek, and we have this place that can be all that so close. It is a most worth while project making this place a community treasure.

Following are 16 improvement suggestions for the City owned Laguna areas south of Hwy 12.

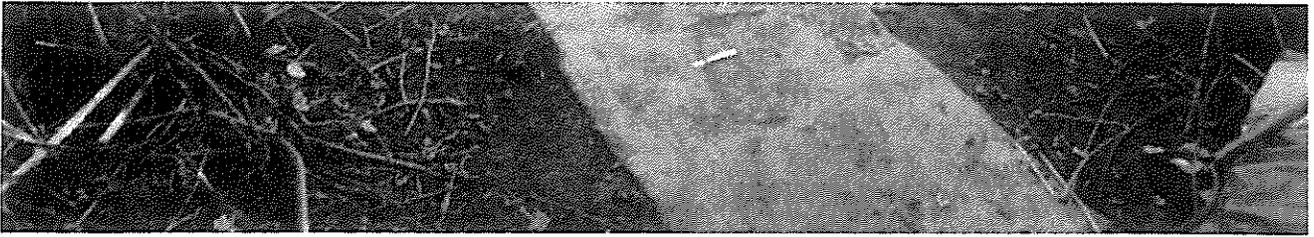
Lynn

1. Get rid of the blackberries

Get rid of the blackberries – all of them. They are an invasive that will persistently keep pushing to overtake this area and will, except for a few fast growing trees. They are wiping out the understory, block off access to the waterways, block views and scratch people. Unless you get them all, they will be back. Other plants, animals and people will all enjoy the entire area more with these blackberries gone – except the homeless residents living among them.

One of ten homeless camp sites cut into the blackberries in the RR Forest





Blackberries 10 feet high climbing through the trees

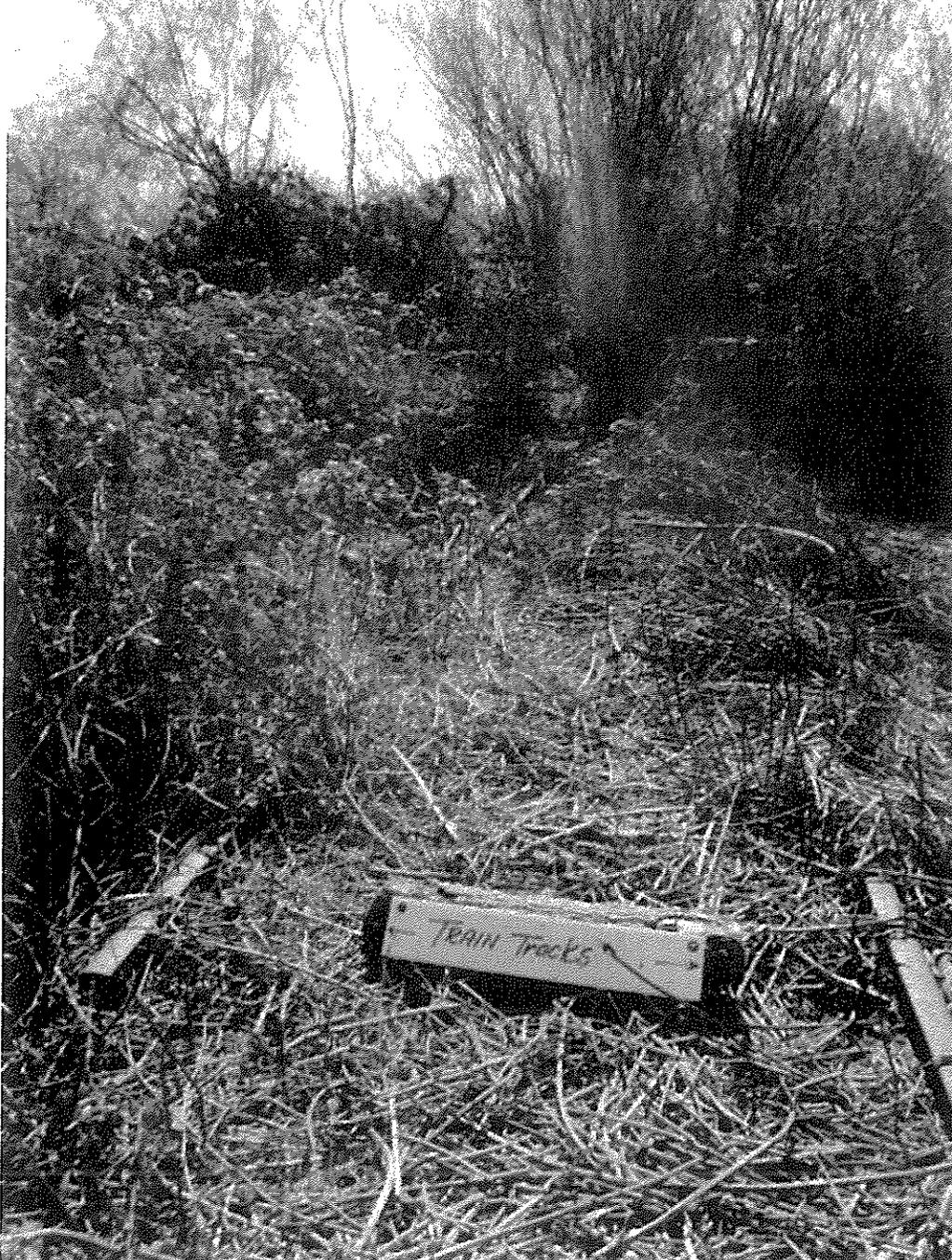


2. Expose the RR track

2. EXPOSE THE RR TRACKS

Hidden beneath blackberries in the RR Forest is the last remaining stretch of above ground RR track from the many miles that once ran through and around Sebastopol. Expose this two hundred yards of track so that one can walk the length. Replace the forty foot section that was unnecessarily removed when the trail was built so that passing trail users will touch and see this piece of our town's history. Here is a place to feature Sebastopol's significant RR History that was all but erased 30 years ago.

This is where a track section was removed was to make it more convenient to put the RR Forest Trail through.



3. Naturalize Calder Creek

From the Calder Creek outfall to a hundred feet past the bridge (600 feet) the creek has been channelized with highly compacted soil, channelized into a straight line with steep banks. Return this readily visible and accessible portion of

compacted soil, channelized into a straight line with steep banks. Return this readily visible and accessible portion of the creek to its more natural form. Cut the banks back to a gentle slope that will become covered with the sand that migrates from up stream. Make it a place where you can walk to the edge of the water, and a kid can build a dam.

The same should be done to the Laguna channel in Tomodachi Park in the areas that are most visible and accessible to park users. Here the bank is generally about four feet above water level with a 45 degree angle into the water.

Out fall of Calder Creek into the Railroad Forest



Mid section picture of the creek banks





Laguna channel at the most accessible area of Tomodachi Park. A steep bank into the water. There is no place to walk to the waters edge



4. Create a foot path

11. Create a foot path

Create a foot path following Calder Creek – an intimate path that goes through the woods and touches the edge of the creek here and there. Start from the end of Barnes Road, meandering along the north side of the creek crossing to the south at the RR Forest Trail bridge, then follow the creek more or less going under the canopy of the large Oregon Ash and oaks. Cross under the Joe Rodota Trail next to the creek at the Calder Creek bridge and continue on to the Laguna Channel (now into county area). Bridge the channel (in the future.) It is not too wide here. And continue on to the meadow's edge where it can intersect the Brown Farm Trail the County plans to develop. From here one can walk to several other trails.

A path through the woods



5. Accommodate Kayaks in Laguna Channel

Accommodate kayaks in Tomodachi Park. 1) Provide a way for vehicles to get near the water and a gentle sloping sand bank to launch a kayak. 2) Clean up the short rubble filled and over grown water connection in the area under the Hwy 12 bridge so kayaks can go from the Park to the larger body of water of the Laguna Channel on the north side of the Hwy 12 bridge. 3) The waterway, south of the bridge has an excessive number of large willow branches overhanging and laying in the water. Some would need to be cleared to let kayaks go back into the interesting recesses in this direction. This would create nearly a mile long kayakable waterway.

You see a large number of kayaks on top of cars and stored in side yards around Sebastopol. However, the closest accessible waters around are a 45 minute drive way. This relatively inexpensive accommodation would create a pretty place to go for a quiet "stroll" on water at our town's doorstep. Back in the 1920 era this waterway was larger and used by many for weekend canoe and row boat outings.

Some have managed to find a way into the Laguna channel. We should make it easy for all the community to enjoy this great resource.



Some potentially pretty and interesting kayakable areas of the channel are clogged with fallen willow branches.





Total blockage of channel



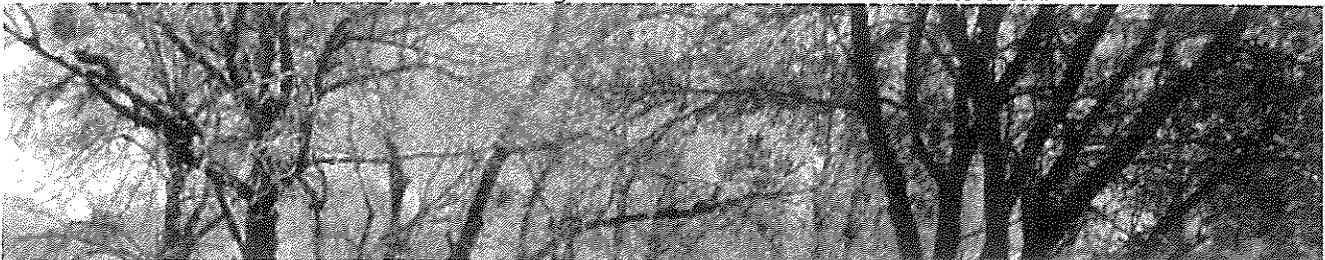
6. Inviting places

Create a few places that invite one to stop and sit to enjoy the surroundings. Place a table, a bench or a sitting logs in an attractive clearing. For the RR Forest three locations are suggested below, but there are others.

1) Between the tall valley oaks 100 feet to the left of the RR Forest Trail as you approach from Coffee Katz. These nicely shaped trees are prominent in the area trees and a clearing around them would show them off. Cleaned up, this location can be seen at an entry to the RR Forest (from Coffee Katz direction) and would set a welcoming tone in contrast to the layers of dark and broken dead willow there now that should be cleared away.



2) At the the clearing west of the RR Forest Trail between the Calder Creek bridge and the Joe Rodotal Trail. It is pretty spot just off the trail from which you can see the Creek and the intersection with the JR Trail. A rough circle of redwood logs would provide a gathering spot/lunch spot for trail users, and something to lean a bike against. Lunch break for the cleanup crew, between bridge and trail intersection and close to creek.





3) Fifty yards east to the JR and RR Trail intersection is the well developed path through the blackberries leading to the popular homeless camping area along Calder Creek. These homeless have good taste in sites for they have picked a most attractive shaded glen. The area is canopied by large Oregon Ash, with the creek and the old RR track near by. While only 150 feet from the trail this spot feels like a far away retreat.





7. Bridge area planting

The Calder Creek bridge is a hang out of sorts, a frequent stopping spot along the RR Forest trail. Often one sees people rest against the railing and visit with others or take a break. Make the vistas down the creek beautiful. Line the banks with different ferns, flowers, and layer back with flowering dogwoods and a variety of pretty plants.

Discussing City business on the bridge



Make this a beautiful view



8. Block the view

In spring and summer the view from the RR Forest Trail makes you feel you are in a woods, however when the trees lose their leaves this changes. From above the fence around a storage yard a collection of equipment and motor homes shine in the sun. The second story of the hotel looks down on the trail from nearby. Screen these views off with live oaks or other trees that will block the nearby man made clutter in the winter months.

The hotel and industrial building and its stored clutter look over the fences and detract from the environment for five months a year when the trees are without leaves.





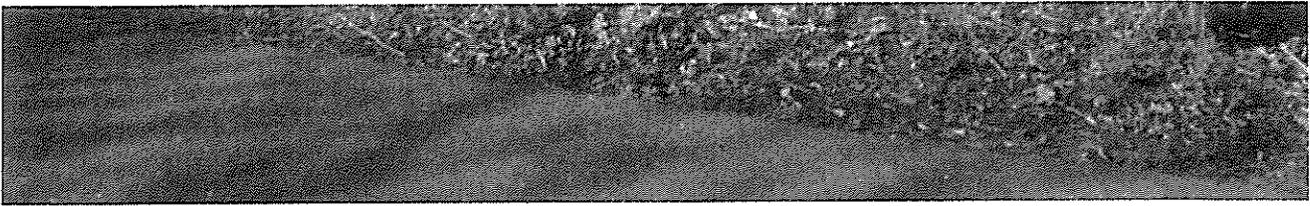
9. Trail vistas vs a wall

Where the Joe Rodota Trail passes along much of the RR Forest a person is presented with walls of foliage in an area where there could be scenic vistas. For many these walls of brush and berries makes the trail feel closed in and not as safe.

Clear and thin these areas back from the trail and opening up occasional vistas into the depths of the woods to allow passersby to see into the richness of this riparian area. This wall blocks it off.

Winter view of the foliage wall. In summer it appears solid and closer to the trail.





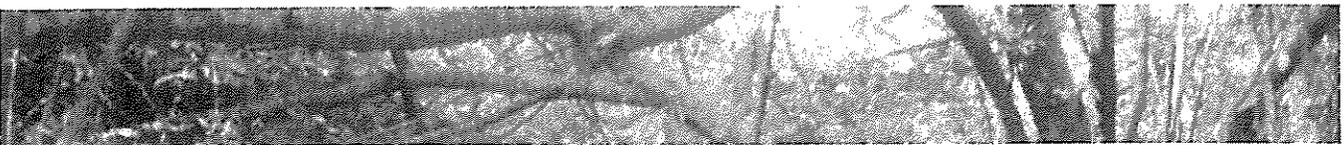
10. Replace the Arroyo Willow with a better kind of tree.

Some of the Laguna areas are thick with Arroyo Willow. It appears that these willows, particularly in the RR Forest, are overly prone to growing quickly and collapsing, the collapsed branches sprout new fast growing branches which develop into trees and collapse again. The process builds up dead thickets and creates fire hazards, maintenance problems, and dams in the creek when the branches collect upstream trash. Not all willow varieties behave like this. Work in these varieties as replacements.

Typical, This new branch collapsed a week after the area was cleared of broken down limbs.



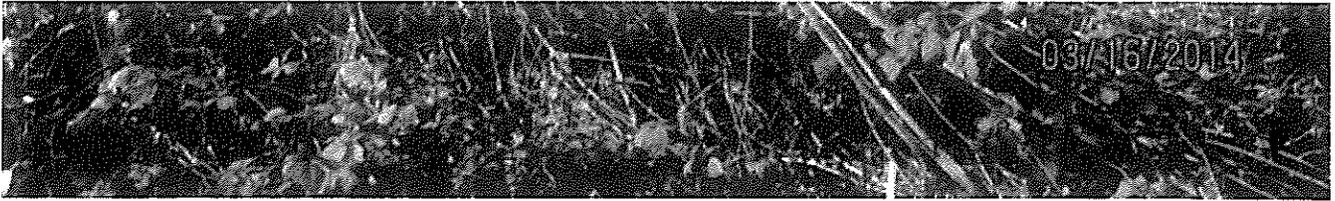
A dam created by collapsing willow and debris, one of several





RR Forest willow that is falling apart creating a mass of fire wood





11. Display the rubble wall

Standing about the center of the RR Forest Trail looking west one can see the standout white of a few big chunks of concrete. Much more concrete is hidden under foliage in a 10 foot cliff. Some of the concrete chunks are massive and you wonder how they were moved here. This wall is at the end of a filled plateau located in the general area behind the old Ford dealership. This too, is a part of the history of Sebastopol, a history of the town's changed geography, and attitudes that a riparian area was something to be filled to make it useful. This rubble should be cleared and exposed for it is interesting in it's history, it's crude but attractive look and it's stark contrast to the surrounding greenery.

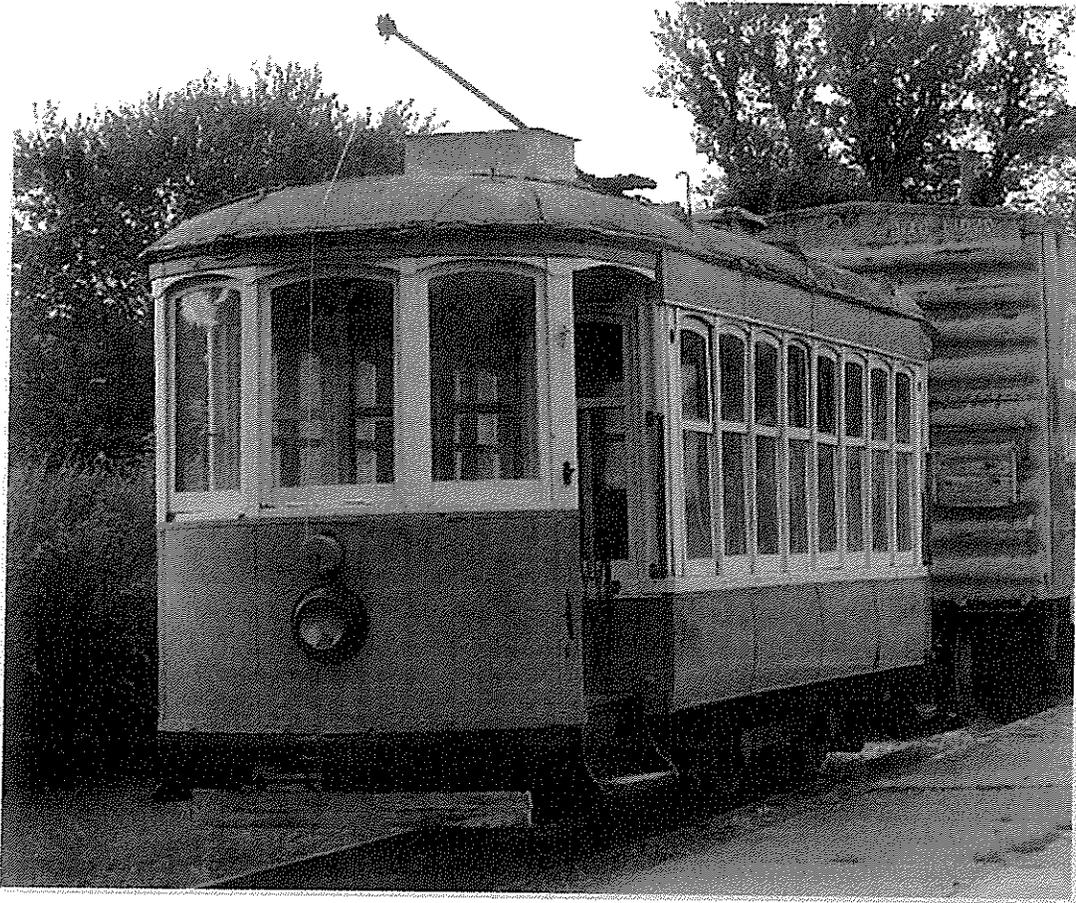


12. Bring back old train cars

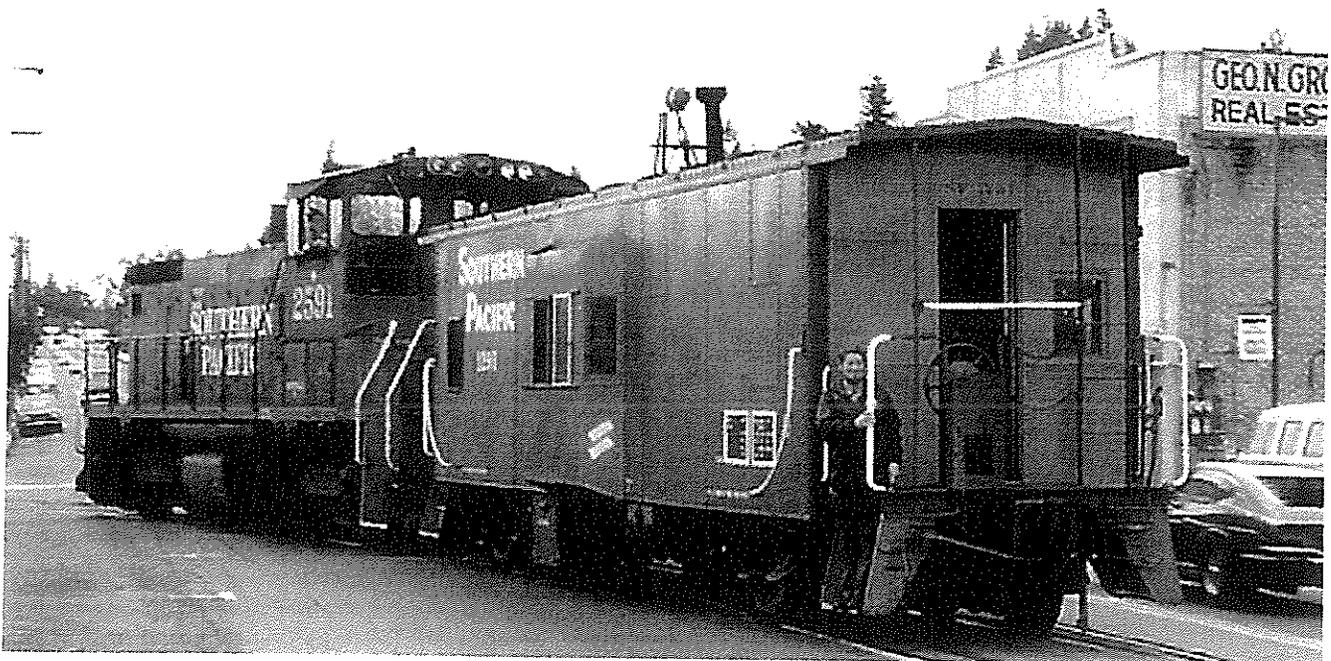
Hidden away in places like Milrick Brothers on Lone Pine and the Petaluma train yard are old RR cars that used to frequent Sebastopol. Place three cars together on the track (noted above) near the RR Forest Trail - a dramatic piece

request Sebastopol. Place three cars together on the track (noted above) near the RR Forest Trail – a dramatic piece of art and a way to showcase our history in a real context.

The local trolley, restored, now in Rio Vista



The trail down Main Street, Sebastopol, turning toward the RR Forest. Early 80's ?





13. Meadow improvement

In Tomodachi Park, a scenic meadow is located pleasantly away from the constant sound of Hwy 12 traffic, but is unusable for people. The coarse plants (perhaps invasive) and rough ground make it hard to traverse. Make this area a walkable, playable field, and put a quieter picnic area at the far end.

Meadow at Tomodachi Park – behind benches.



14. Trail under new bridge

Sebastopol's Laguna Wetlands Trail is only 800 feet from the Joe Rodota Trail, but to get from one to the other takes miles of travel. If there was a direct connection between these two trails it would link together many trail systems, existing and planned. It would make it so one could safely walk or bike from Sebastopol to the popular Laguna De Santa Rosa Trail. The key to this connection is a trail under the new Hwy 12 bridge.

The time to do the under bridge foundation for the trail is when the bridge is being built, by working with the bridge contractor, hopefully. The heavy equipment, roads in, cement pumps, manpower etc are all there. Putting this off will

make this little stretch of trail much more complicated and expensive. This planning needs to start soon!

800 feet and a bridge between these two trails



15. The City of Sebastopol should own this lot.

The Village Park and Rail Road Forest properties really do include the prettiest part of the of the whole Laguna. At the south vertex of of these two parcels is a two acre open field with one prominent oak tree. The City of Sebastopol should own this lot. This lot is in the City Limit, above the 100 year flood line, and all buildable. It is zoned Commercial. It will be developed.

When it does get developed it will be either for the maximum return on investment, or, for the maximum benefit of the community – two very different goals. The property is unique. It is the last open piece of property between the City and the Laguna. Existing development has literally walled of the Laguna from our town from hotel to hotel visually and physically. Sebastopol has many community needs that this property could accommodate, things that will invite the community into this property, and the City can develop the property in a way that features the Laguna instead of shutting it off.

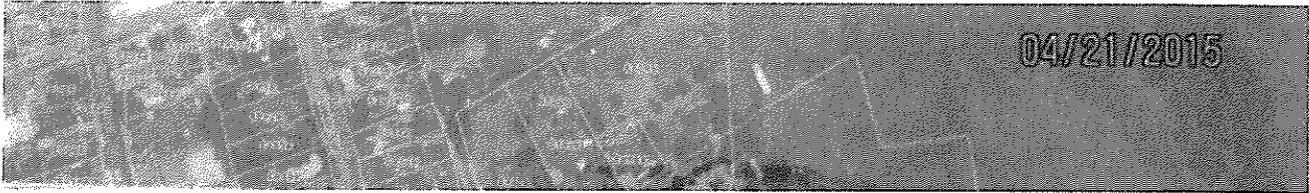
Developable open two acre field at the corner between two City owned parcels





Tan area is the lot shown above





16. Ponds/marsh and overflow

Create seasonal ponds. In the area where Calder Creek goes under the bridge on the RR Forest Trail the water level of the creeks is actually higher than the surrounding lands. In high waters Calder Creek overflows its banks and the water flows off in a different direction. The area around the bridge has three locations where 100+ foot pond can be easily built. Winter overflow will fill them. If the Sebastopol Inn or future development close by had a grey water system supplying these ponds, they could flourish year round.

Silverton Oregon has done something similar to this with an added attraction. A local volunteer group created and maintains beautiful flower gardens in and around similar ponds. They have become town attraction. These ponds would be close to our town and easily viewed from both trails.

Ponds similar to this one could be developed near the JR and RR Forest Trails



END

Submitted by
Lynn Deedler 10/8/15

Laguna Restoration Plan, General Comments

A great deal of information is provided with much detail and many recommendations. The recommendations, for the most part, have little detail. It appears that nearly all of the improvements to the preserve require further expert study before any action can be taken. It would be nice if a few improvements had enough detail to proceed without needing such studies. Given the cost and direction of this plan this seems like a reasonable hope.

The plan's focus is not on human values and seems not to give significant consideration the immediate proximity to the City limits and how the community can enjoy and feel proud of this special place. It is more about providing a nice place for animals undisturbed by humans in an area where miles of undisturbed habitat extend in two directions. Many suggestions that would add value, beauty, and interest to humans are not included in the plan.

Many of the recommendations do not seem well thought out.

Following are just a few examples, and represent many more. Blackberries, a major issue, is detailed in a separate response.

Hide the Hwy 12 bridge area

Blocking the view of the Hwy 12 bridge/hwy with planting will also block the view from the way the great majority of the people of our community experience this area. Twenty thousand plus people a day drive across that bridge at the main entrance to our town. They get a short look at these waterways. In traffic many have several minutes to view this most attractive area of our community. To make it so that a few people will not be able to look at cars, a thousand times as many will not be able to see the waterway, oaks trees, and park.

Shining white in the winter sun.

On the other hand, the suggestion submitted to plant trees with year around leaves to block views of the Sebastopol Inn and the white motor homes in storage overlooking the RR Forest in the winter was omitted. These white surfaces shine bright in the winter sun diminish the attractiveness of the area along the busy RR Forest Trail.

Mow a path to the JR Trail

A Plan recommendation is to mow a path from Tomodatchi Park south to the Joe Rodota Trail. This statement is the extent of the detail, plus a very small map with a dotted line -- not much for the biggest addition to the preserve. The line on the map shows the mowed path going straight through the middle of a field. Not addressed is that one third of the trail would be in unmowable woods or the terrain problems there.

This trail could be one of the more scenic walks in the Preserve, particularly if it touched the edge of the Laguna Channel or bridged Calder Creek, which it could. Left out of this suggestion and importantly, suggestions for the whole plan, are words like, scenic, beautiful, magic spots, (and there are some.)

This town provided a bench and little view area at an opening to their creek . This spot is near a bike trail; about the same distance Calder Creek is from the JR Trail.



A beautiful environment for Sebastopol, south of the Hwy 12 bridge

It is said that all great towns rest on a significant body of water. Sebastopol is no exception. We are fortunate to have the Laguna channel through the most beautiful part of the Laguna that is right at the town's doorstep. It is unfortunate that we have not taken care of it. The setting and waterway has such great potential. Lets hope this process is a beginning of making this area in to a beautiful natural environment – even a community showpiece.

This is area is a gateway to our town in one direction, and a gateway to the Laguna in the other – a prominent location that can affect how we feel about our town and how we value the Laguna. It is a ten minute walk from the town core that can take you into a completely different natural environment. Our community relishes and needs such places to walk, ride bikes, explore, kayak, play in a creek, and we have this place that can be all that so close. It is a most worth while project making this place a community treasure.

Above is the cover statement for 16 suggestions for the restoration plan. Only one was partially included, blackberries. This plan uses a cautious traditional approach to “restoration”, native plants and animal habitat. This plan needs vision and creativity to make this a beautiful place that includes the people in the neighborhood as well, to make the preserve the “community treasure” it could be.

Response to the Laguna Restoration Plan on Blackberry Removal

The blackberries are the biggest degrading factor of the preserve area, and potentially the biggest challenge to deal with. The recommendations do not recognize this. The recommendations are unrealistic, conflicting, and lack detail. It is hard to imagine that the blackberry recommendations came from one who has actually employed them or knows this terrain.

The recommendation: *“Managed goat grazing or mowing for above ground growth... and remove roots, by hand or machinery”*

It will take an incredible amount of labor to remove all the underground runners and root balls. Roots do not pull up. The stems come from root balls, root balls that are well anchored by a network of roots that connect to other root balls well down in the soil. Whether it is by hand or mechanical digging, getting them all will not happen, even in the accessible soils in open areas. This means the problem with blackberries will be back. The digging out roots process takes repeated digging for two to three year to get them all.

Some of the blackberries are conveniently located on accessible flat ground, but most are not. The proposal does not address this majority of difficult to access blackberries. Below are a few pictures representative of these areas where man nor machine cannot dig. Examples; blackberries entangled in layers of collapsed willow, enmeshed in the roots and branches of dense willow thickest, growing across a steep bank of large concrete chunks, growing out of the rock ballast and in between the railroad ties of a long section of track, growing in gullies and on steep banks; this is where the majority of the blackberries live. This significant problem issue is not mentioned.

While digging up roots by hand is clear enough, what is suggested by mechanical means is not clear at all. This kind of suggestion should completely clear.

Recommendations conflict with other strongly emphasized goals. Examples: “avoid soil disturbance” which is often repeated, “Avoid root damage to desirable plants,” “use care not to damage/destroy desirable plants hidden in invasives.” (How do you explain this to the goats suggested?)

The recommendations do not emphasize as important that all blackberries must go, but rather only remove what is “*feasible*.” What does feasible means? Blackberries are one of the most prolific and aggressive invasive species in this environment. What will happen, after the Council’s current determination to restore this area, after the volunteers are tired and the funds have run out? The berries left will keep reproducing. It has happened here before.

The report does not address the ten foot wall of blackberries on the east side of the Joe Rodota Trail. These are on County property, but they will become the City’s problem if ignored. Animals that spread the seeds do not know property boundaries, and this huge hedge produces a gazillion seeds looking for newly dug and mulched soil. The County will allow the removal of these berries.

One of the few specific suggestions was to divide the Rail Road Forest into four geometric areas and remove the blackberries from one area per year, then to apply what is learned from working each area. Using this process, on top of the recommendation to remove the roots extends the completion time out to about six years. This approach will take too long. Many people have tackled black berry removal of this scope and terrain. The consultant should provide a tested answer rather than the suggestion of learn as you go.

The report did not recommend the use of an herbicide based on City policy. The City allows using herbicides on City property when there are no reasonable alternatives. Using selected herbicides is a practical way to go, and is warranted in this situation. The City Council approved the use of Garlon 4 for blackberries in the Rail Road Forest two years ago. (The work was not completed.) This is a category D, low toxicity spray listed for blackberries and use in wetlands. The product was recommended by Brent Reed, Restoration Projects Supervisor for the Laguna Foundation. This herbicide use here was supported by Adam McKannay, Environmental Scientist for the Dept of Fish and Wildlife, and other area professionals. It is not difficult to apply this herbicide individually on berry regrowth sprouts.

The consultants suggests cut invasive plant material should be hauled off and disposed of to prevent regrowth. This is a difficult and costly procedure, and not needed. Cut berry canes can restart new growth only when planted in ideal conditions shortly after they are cut. In the Rail Road Forest masses of berry vines were chopped into short pieces, creating a mulch and adding needed organic content to the soil. Inspections found no pieces regrowing.

Blackberries growing among layers of broken down willows. (Winter, berries are just starting to grow out.)



A dense thicket of willow far to tight for man or machine to dig in. (winter, berries are just starting to grow out.)



Blackberries growing into the rail road track and rock ballast. (Hand cut path to see the tracks.)



Blackberries growing among huge concrete chunks of a ten foot embankment.



Re: Laguna Wetlands Preserve Restoration and Management Plan (draft)

Dear Creek Stewards,

This restoration plan does not suggest restoration of the waterways, the most significant features in the area. And most significant among them is Calder Creek. The first couple hundred yards of Calder Creek beyond the storm drain exit in the Rail road forest have been highly altered and straightened into a channel with squared sides of highly compacted soil. There are no plans to restore this creek to a more natural state.
(see pictures below.)

In your presentation to Council several years ago when endeavoring to restore the portion of Calder Creek in Ives Park, you painted a lovely picture of a creek with sloped banks planted out with ferns and creek trees over head, and a place for kids to explore and wade in the sand and experience the joy of a creek.

This creek area of Calder is anything but that picture. It could be and should be. This is a highly visible area, or could be, right next to the city limits and to the side of Joe Rodota Trail. It is at a kind of entrance to our town, where many of our community and visitors walk or bike by. It should be beautiful. This restoration document is the place to make that a goal.

Oversight agencies encourage naturalizing channelized waterways. The Army Core of Engineers, the lead agency, requires a no fee permit that can be filled out by a nonprofessional. Funding grants are available that require no match from the City.

Also, left out of the restoration plan are other waterway restorations and improvements.

Blackberry removal, there is no mention of the specific need to remove all these plants from the banks of the creeks and Laguna Channel where these plants block a huge portion of the visual and physical access to the waterways.

Banks of the Laguna Channel. In Tomodachi Park the banks of the channel are up to four feet higher than summer water levels, with a steep drop off into the water, thanks to fill. This makes getting near the water, a significant feature of the Park, hard to get near. Bank areas should be gently, naturally sloped.

An accommodation for kayaks Our community has hundreds of people who enjoy kayaking. We have a potentially idealic place to enjoy this passive

recreational use at our door step. But we have no accommodation to connect this resource and this need. The plan's authors have judged that a convenient launch spot should not be accommodated.

Clogged with branches The Channel along Tomodachi Park is strewn with down trees, some going clear across the channel. It has been suggested that this should all remain as these down trees provide habitat. This is an extreme view. This area has many times the congestion of down material compared to natural waters in similar settings. The quantity of down material should be reduced to a natural and appropriate level to provide both habitat and room for kayakers to explore up the Channel. The extreme clutter of branches makes this area of the channel, at the park look ugly and degraded.

I hope you will encourage making this potential gem of an area at the edge of our town core the beautiful and natural treasure it could be for the community to enjoy and be proud of.

Lynn

This view of Calder Creek is from the RR Forest Trail Bridge. Squared banks of highly compacted soil drop into a channelized creek.





Response to the Laguna Restoration Plan on suggestions not included

Little in the restoration plan makes the areas more accessible or desirable to the near by human community. Recommendations appear based the premise that restoration means keeping human activity out of areas. In explaining this the restoration plan author(s) express a no compromise approach -- a belief that this is the only way it can be done.

This is of particular concern in the Rail Road Forest area. While most all of Laguna is a vast area well away from human activity, the RR Forest area is different. It's acres are nestled against the Sebastopol City limit and the town core. The land next to the down town core has different values and needs compared to more remote areas. All needs should be addressed – plant, animal and human.

Example suggestions left out of the Plan to reduce human intrusion

No Exposing RR Track

Exposing/clearing the last remaining several hundred yards of hidden railroad track that exists in our historic railroad town. This is a real piece of history that brings to life an important part of Sebastopol's past. Let people see it. Allow then to walk along these tracks.

No Providing A Kayaking Launch

At our towns edge in both directions from new Tomodatchi Park are beautiful kayaking waters. If a Sebastopol resident wanted to kayak these waters the Plan's creator(s) suggest it would be environmentally better to drive out of town four miles, park on Occidental Road and carrying one's kayak several hundred yards to the water there. This has problems beyond the miles of extra driving. This rough path works for fit people only and the water is choked solid with weeds.

No Calder Creek Trail

A trail along this sweet little year around creek could start next to the City's down town core, providing a quiet respite, a place to connect with nature a few minutes walk from the center of town. Include a bench to sit on to talk, to have a lunch and to contemplate the stream. This area is among the prettiest in the Laguna.

"People intruding disturb the wild life." How true is this? The world is full of parks and neighborhoods where people and native animals coexist comfortably. Deer, fox, raccoons abound in rural neighborhoods around Sebastopol. Spring

Lake Park rents dozens of kayaks daily and the waters there team with wildlife. Surprisingly, you see rabbits and quail families next to the Petaluma Airport runway landing area unbothered by the planes. A deer family lives near St Stevens Church along Robinson Road who pay little attention to passing cars. This is in the middle of Sebastopol. Community needs and animals can easily share this area of the Laguna.

Spring Lake shores team with wildlife that seems indifferent to the many kayaks



For critters who might be “disturbed” by a few more humans entering the area, there are miles of excellent undisturbed environment both up stream and down stream along the Laguna channel.

The Open Space Easement restrictions were also cited as a justification for this restrictive position on the Plan. But that Easement specifically allows development of “passive recreational uses.” It feels like the restoration plan is being guided by a few in the community that have positions or degrees that allow them to impose their philosophy of what is important. Here, they have unnecessarily omitted compatible and appropriate human needs of the community.

Lynn

Following are four if the sixteen suggestions submitted to Prunuske Chatham for this area (The other twelve available upon request.)

2. Expose the RR track

Hidden beneath blackberries in the RR Forest is the last remaining stretch of above ground RR track from the many miles that once ran through and around Sebastopol. Expose this two hundred yards of track so that one can walk the length. Replace the forty foot section that was unnecessarily removed when the trail was built so that passing trail users will touch and see this piece of our town's history. Here is a place to feature Sebastopol's significant RR History that was all but erased 30 years ago.

This is where a track section was removed was to make it more convenient to put the RR Forest Trail through.



3. Naturalize Calder Creek

From the Calder Creek outfall to a hundred feet past the bridge (600 feet) the creek has been channelized with highly compacted soil; channelized into a strait line with steep banks. Return this readily visible and accessible portion of the creek to its more natural form. Cut the banks back to a gentle slope that will become covered with the sand that migrates from up stream. Make it a place where you can walk to the edge of the water, and a kid can build a dam.

The same should be done to the Laguna channel in Tomodachi Park in the areas that are most visible and accessible to park users. Here the bank is generally about four feet above water level with a 45 degree angle into the water.

Out fall of Calder Creek into the Railroad Forest



Mid section picture of the creek banks



Laguna channel at the most accessible area of Tomodachi Park. A steep bank into the water.
There is no place to walk to the waters edge



4. Create a foot path

Create a foot path following Calder Creek - an intimate path that goes through the woods and touches the edge of the creek here and there. Start from the end of Barnes Road, meandering along the north side of the creek crossing to the south at the RR Forest Trail bridge, then follow the creek more or less going under the canopy of the large Oregon Ash and oaks. Cross under the Joe Rodota Trail next to the creek at the Calder Creek bridge and continue on to the Laguna Channel (now into county area). Bridge the channel (in the future.) It is not too wide here. And continue on to the meadow's edge where it can intersect the Brown Farm Trail the County plans to develop. From here one can walk to several other trails.

A path through the woods



5. Accommodate Kayaks in Laguna Channel

Accommodate kayaks in Tomodachi Park. 1) Provide a way for vehicles to get near the water and a gentle sloping sand bank to launch a kayak. 2) Clean up the short rubble filled and over grown water connection in the area under the Hwy 12 bridge so kayaks can go from the Park to the larger body of water of the Laguna Channel on the north side of the Hwy 12 bridge. 3) The waterway, south of the bridge has an excessive number of large willow branches overhanging and laying in the water. Some would need to be cleared to let kayaks go back into the interesting recesses in this direction. This would create nearly a mile long kayakable waterway.

You see a large number of kayaks on top of cars and stored in side yards around Sebastopol. However, the closest accessible waters around are a 45 minute drive way. This relatively inexpensive accommodation would create a pretty place to go for a quiet “stroll” on water at our town’s doorstep. Back in the 1920 era this waterway was larger and used by many for weekend canoe and row boat outings.

Some have managed to find a way into the Laguna channel. We should make it easy for all the community to enjoy this great resource.



Some potentially pretty and interesting kayakable areas of the channel are clogged with fallen willow branches.



Total blockage of channel

