

**From:** [Eileen Mathias](#)  
**To:** [commentletters](#)  
**Subject:** Statewide Dredged or Fill Procedures  
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Dear Water Board Members:

I am retired now but worked for 20 years as a librarian in the field of environmental sciences. I now live in Sebastopol CA, and have learned how important the Laguna de Santa Rosa is to the health of our local ecology, aquifers, and economy. Wetlands are essential to a healthy environment for a multitude of reasons. Wetlands provide a great biodiversity of flora and fauna, and are a necessary way-stop for migrating birds. Wetlands relieve the threat of flooding during the spring, and their waters are filtered through the ground as they replenish our aquifers. Soils invaded by the Laguna wetlands during the winter are exceptionally fertile. The Laguna has great recreational value. It has trails for hikers and birders, and kayakers frequent the waterways.

Those of us who live near the Laguna de Santa Rosa have learned valuable lessons from studying how winter rains replenish our aquifers, so important in California. Our aquifers are natural storage systems, with water filtrated by the soils and rocks as it seeps down.

My husband and I walk the trails frequently, and are always surprised by the abundance of life - otters, turtles, snakes, singing frogs in the spring, and black-crowned night herons during the winter. We have counted up to 50 herons at a time on one portion of the trail. During migration, a great variety of birds and water fowl appear.

Sebastopolians have learned to live with the Laguna by giving it the space it needs as it flows and ebbs, because we value all that it gives to us. What is more important than life-giving waters? A blueberry field is flooded during the winter, and is lush with blueberries during the summer. A few cow pastures are flooded during the winter so cows move farther up the slopes. Their grass is green all summer long in an area where nearby hills turn brown, or golden if you will. A nearby commercial area, the Barlow, partially flooded once for a few days this last winter, but store owners know this can happen and are prepared. Special equipment on either side of store doors allow temporary walls to be built to block the flood waters.



In Northern California, we are used to seeing rice fields flood naturally during the winter. These fields produce prolific crops for the harvest, but also provide an important food source after the growing season and harvest for migrating and wintering birds. Farmers have learned that their fields are useful for multiple purposes, with the coming and going of the seasons.

Filling our wetlands for development is counter-productive, and will prove to be detrimental in the long run. We need our wetlands for replenishment of our aquifers. We need our wetlands for the fertile soils they produce. We need our wetlands for the abundance of flora and fauna they support, and consequently the healthy ecosystems and recreational interest they create. We need our wetlands to help control flooding, and loss of soils from uncontrolled runoff (yet another important role of wetlands).

When wetlands are filled for development, they sometimes flood during heavy rains inland or during storm surges on ocean shorelines, as witnessed in the recent flooding of Houston. The cost of rebuilding Houston will be phenomenal. Had Houston planned better, using wetlands to help with flood control. It is a far more intelligent choice, based on science, to let wetlands remain.

Thank you for allowing us to comment.

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Sent from Eileen Mathias' iPad