



The lovely open space at DeLaveaga Park is not being put to its best use, some citizens complain.

Recreation

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## New Golf Course Sparks Debate Over De Laveaga

PLOP 565 acres of redwood-studded open space into the middle of a recreation-starved community, and you've got the perfect recipe for debate and controversy — such as the growing discussion of how the crown jewel of the city park system, DeLaveaga Park, should be divided among its citizens.

Ingredients of the latest argument include nine holes of golf, a neglected and abused parcel of open space, a nationally acclaimed "Frisbee golf course," and a National Guard tank.

At the center of the dilemma is the city's desire to add nine holes to the 18-hole municipal golf course already there. A group of "disc (Frisbee) golfers" is teed off about the plan because it will wipe out one of the most impressive and popular Frisbee golf layouts in the country while domesticating one of the city's few remaining swaths of open space.

"The city has no concept of open space," said Tom Schot, a Santa Cruz native who has invested several thousand dollars and several hundred hours of volunteer work into the improvement of De Laveaga.

"They want to take the most beautiful piece of land they own and turn it over to golfers for their exclusive use. That's fine for golfers, but the majority of people in Santa Cruz are not golfers. But if they put another golf course there, the majority of Santa Cruzans won't have De Laveaga to go to anymore," Schot said.

City parks and recreation director Jim Lang does not totally disagree with Schot, but his primary concern is that the present DeLaveaga golf course has reached the upper limits of the number of players it can accommodate.

"Eighteen thousand rounds of golf were played on the course last year, and that's about as much as it can handle," said Lang. "Santa Cruz has grown, and a couple of golf courses in the Santa Clara Valley have been closed recently to make room for

development, and so we are getting the overflow.

"I understand Schot's concerns, and we will make every effort to find another location for the Frisbee golf course at the city's expense. We will also enhance the other areas of De Laveaga as part of an overall plan for the park," Lang said.

After talking about the new nine holes for the last two years, the city set the ball in motion three weeks ago by appropriating \$12,000 for a consultant to determine whether it is "economically feasible" to build the course.

Although the decision to go ahead with the course could be made within a few months, construction could not begin until 1990, because the city's general plan calls for DeLaveaga's open space to remain unscathed until that time.

The disc golfers are not the only ones the city must deal with to score the expansion. Since 1967, the National Guard has leased land from the city for an armory (a gymnasium-sized building used for storing munitions) and occasionally uses the park for training exercises, sometimes using tanks.

The city has been attempting to renegotiate its contract with the National Guard to free up the land while allowing it to keep ammunition stored on the property.

In return for several minor trade-offs — installation of a fence, a gate, and a road; access to a pistol range used by the city police; and construction of an orienteering course — the city would like the National Guard to relinquish its rights to the needed property. According to Major Steve Mensik of the National Guard office in Sacramento, there should be no problem coming to such an agreement.

Meanwhile, the occasional tank isn't the only thing scarring the green hills of DeLaveaga Park. The isolated acreage has made a convenient

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## DeLaveaga

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dumping ground for everything from beer cans to old cars, not to mention a speedway for illegal off-road vehicles.

Disc golfer Schot maintains DeLaveaga's open space has never been fully appreciated by the Santa Cruz citizens because the city has never paid much attention to it, content to leave it in its deteriorating natural state rather than grass it over and put in picnic areas and hiking trails. The reason is a lack of money in the city budget.

Richard Rahders, a concerned citizen and chairman of the city planning

commission until retiring a week ago, espouses an "open dialogue" before any decision is made.

"The possibilities are unlimited for the open space," said Rahders. "A soccer field, picnic areas, a biotic history display, and a landscaped area at 'the top of the world' have all been talked about."

It would be capricious to simply put in a new golf course without an open dialogue first," Rahders said. "If the people of Santa Cruz decide they want nine more holes of golf, fine. Maybe they do. But let's at least talk about it." •

—Kevin Hanson