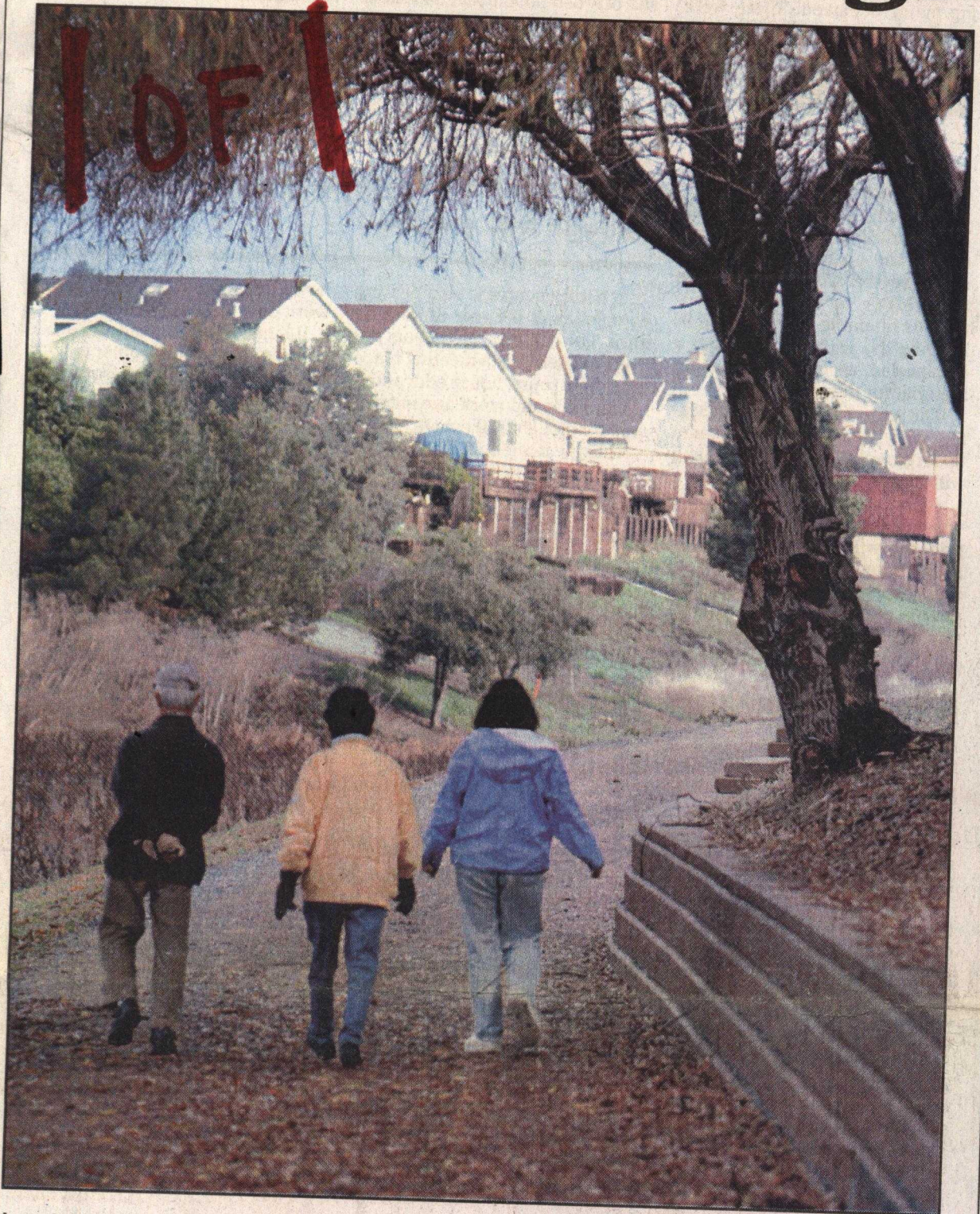


All systems are go



Locals enjoy a morning walk on the new Wetlands Trail System that winds around Struve Slough between Main Street, Montebello Drive and Pennsylvania Drive.

Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

First phase of Wetlands Trail System almost finished

By TARMO HANNULA
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

The first phase of the 6-mile Wetlands Trail System is getting its finishing touches with the completion of a footbridge and installation of a new nature center.

The new 9-foot wide, 1-mile trail that winds around Struve Slough near Main Street and Montebello and Pennsylvania drives is the first of a three-phase plan to wind trails in and around area sloughs to make the wetlands more accessible to the public.

Steve Palmisano, environmental manager for the city of Watsonville, said the project will allow a chance for the public to better understand and interact with the natural water systems in the Pajaro Valley.

"It's exciting to see the completion of the first phase of this trail," Palmisano said. "We are all very pleased with the hard work that



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Harvey Jennell (left) and Mike Zamora of Don Chapin Company team up recently to construct a redwood footbridge as part of the new Wetlands Trail System in Watsonville.

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has been done."

The Don Chapin Company has been handling the construction end of the operation, which includes several wood and concrete footbridges, or boardwalks, numerous retaining walls that aid in keeping the pathway level and a chip-sealed, asphalt-based paving material for the main path.

The project started in early September with major grading, some undergrowth clearing and leveling with heavy machinery.

Eventually, the 5.8-mile system, with an estimated \$1.38 million price tag, will connect several area sloughs and include educational sign postings that will help educate people about birds and animals that live in and around the slough.

A nature center is also nearing completion at the rear of Ramsay Park. The center will serve as a staging area for slough trail events.

A nature center is also nearing completion at the rear of Ramsay Park. The center, which abuts the trail, will serve as a meeting place for school tours, house educational materials and work as a staging area for slough trail events.

Harvey Jennell of Don Chapin Company said he was helping construct a redwood footbridge over one section of water near Main Street.

"One thing I can tell you, they are using really nice materials here," Jennell said. "This is going to turn out very nice, and it should

last a long time. It's a pleasure to work on a project like this."

Jennell added that he and other workers have had problems with youths coming into the construction site and vandalizing materials.

"Some kids have come through and torn up surveying stakes, and that's expensive work being destroyed," Jennell said. "They throw some of the materials in the water and it's a shame; this is such a great project for the environment."

The next phase of the trail project should get under way in the spring.