

Endangered Species

Salamander Pals Swamp Board, Pond Preserved

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A slimy, but attractively colored lizard-like amphibian species known as the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander Tuesday was all but guaranteed a chance to live another million years or so.

By unanimous vote of county supervisors, zoning which would have allowed a possible mobile home park on the salamander's breeding grounds east of La Selva Beach was rejected.

The door was not completely shut on the mobile home park, but the protection of the rare species clearly had first priority. Said to have survived for more than a million years, the amphibian now is listed as an endangered species, and entitled to some government protection.

The salamander, colored almost black with bright gold spots, apparently lives and breeds only in this area of the world.

Santa Cruz Sally, more formally known as *Amphystoma macrodactylum croceum*, had a lot of friends at Tuesday's hearing.

Salamander supporters filled the hearing room, sat on the floor and in the aisles, and overflowed into the hallway. Their statements in support of the endangered species ran nearly two hours. A petition said to contain 850 signatures was presented in its favor.

Federal, state, and private conservationist officials and organizations offered to negotiate with owners of the 34-acre property for its purchase. Several such offers were made at the hearing.

Edwin H. Colledge, representing a group of five property owners, agreed to consider a sale. Colledge.

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a former biological laboratory worker, said he has sought advice from the state on protection of the rare reptile, but has gotten no cooperation from scientists.

Conservationists, in turn, said Colledge would not cooperate with scientists.

After the zoning hearing, however, he and the scientists and conservationists agreed to an intensive program of study to see just how much of the property must be left alone to preserve the amphibian.

A salamander "task force", headed by UC-Berkeley Prof. Robert C. Stebbins, will start its work with the first heavy rains.

The combined owner-conservationist group, under the coordination of Don Chamberlin, county deputy public works director, will meet again Wednesday at 2:30 p.m. to report on the availability of public and private funds for purchase. Colledge said his group of owners needs a definite commitment, since it has a \$89,000 progress payment to make Monday.

Some county supervisors, in supporting a zoning denial, said the salamander was not the main reason for their action. Henry Stebbins noted he has twice before proposed mobile home park applications in the same area. The county planning commission and planning staff also recommended against development in such a remote area.

Supervisor Dan Forbus agreed that his main concerns were the problems with water sewers, and fire protection.

Forbus left heavily at the U.S. Department of the Interior, the state Department of Fish and Game, and the state Attorney General's office for failing to bring the salamander matter up earlier.

James H. Schroeder of Wildlife Alive, a conservationist group, had charged "someone in the Department of the Interior was told about this, but forgot about it for 14 months."

The rare species was first discovered by James Anderson, Danny Joe Jimenez, 19, charged a student of Stebbins, in 1954. In with the fatal beating last July 1969, one of its two breeding of an elderly Tucumcari woman.

areas was wiped out in the widening of Highway 1 for the Rob Roy junction freeway interchange. State highway crews, at the urging of scientists, built a new breeding pond nearby.

But Stephen B. Ruth, a UC-Berkeley zoologist who has led the fight to save the salamander, told supervisors this pond "has not been very successful,"

despite the state highway crews' effort. This leaves only the LaSelva pond, which covers about three acres in the winter, as a breeding area. During the warm months, the salamanders retreat to the dampness of a nearby willow grove.

The Santa Cruz County Youth Commission also has been a leader in the salamander battle, and support came from a long list of organizations and individuals.

Mrs. H. R. Lans, and a neighboring landowner were the sole speakers in favor of the mobile home park, outside of Colledge.

"If they like the salamanders so much, why couldn't we sell them some and let them take them home in a box?" asked Mrs. Lans. "They are no good to us."

"What good is a salamander?" a member of the Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society replied. "We don't know. But when you destroy a species, you destroy a little bit of mankind."

Sniper Wounds New Mexico DA

TUCUMCARI, N.M. (AP) — A sniper armed with a 30-caliber carbine shot and killed Tucumcari Dist. Atty. Victor C. Breen Wednesday morning as Breen left his home to go to work, police said.

State Police set up roadblocks around this eastern New Mexico community and the sheriff's office and city police put all available manpower into the search for the assailant.

Breen, 55, had been district attorney for 23 years. He was involved in the second day of prosecuting the murder trial of a student of Stebbins, in 1954. In with the fatal beating last July 1969, one of its two breeding of an elderly Tucumcari woman.