

Keeley searching for greenbelt funds

Assemblyman developing plan to acquire state money

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SANTA CRUZ — State legislators cautioned city residents Thursday not to expect a direct budget allocation to save the Bombay parcel from development.

If money is adopted to buy Bombay in this year's state budget, it will come via a more circuitous route, said Assemblyman Fred Keeley, D-Boulder Creek.

"I have to try to look at it in the context of a statewide perspective," said Keeley. He said he has fashioned a Bombay-allocation strategy that he believes stands a better chance of passing muster with the Legislature and the governor.

Keeley, a member of the Legislature's Budget Conference Committee, said he is working to add \$10.8 million to the governor's proposed allocation for both the Coastal Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board.

"My plan is to give (the two

groups) pots of money ... and then we can be advocates for the Bombay property," he said.

Keeley and state Sen. Bruce McPherson, R-Santa Cruz, serve on the Legislative Oversight Committee for the Coastal Conservancy, and would be in a position to encourage the group to allocate money for buying Bombay.

Local greenbelt supporters hope to get at least \$1 million in state money to help buy the \$3.9-million, 246-acre parcel on Santa Cruz's west side. The property owner wants to sell the land along Moore Creek by November, or else he may proceed with development plans.

The City Council has allocated another \$1 million toward the purchase, and supporters also are raising money from individuals, businesses and foundations.

There also is a plan afoot in the city to put a \$5.6 million bond mea-

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sure on the November ballot. If approved by two-thirds of city voters, proceeds from the bonds would be used in part to buy the Westside greenbelt land.

But even with that fallback possibility, local officials believe some kind of state support is essential.

"It shows it's a priority beyond Santa Cruz and helps the electorate to know it's not all on their shoulders," said Andy Schiffman, a member of the Bombay Coalition. "We're trusting (Keeley) to come up with a strategy that will work."

Both Keeley and McPherson said there simply is not the legislative support for the Bombay

greenbelt that there is for the larger Coast Dairies property.

The Budget Conference Committee this week agreed to put \$5 million in the state budget to buy the 7,500-acre North Coast parcel. If that line-item allocation makes it into the final budget, it will complete the \$43 million funding package for one of California's most important coastal-protection projects.

"If you're a resident of Santa Cruz County, you see Coast Dairies and Bombay in a similar way," said Keeley. "If you're in Sacramento, looking at it from a statewide perspective, Coast Dairies is of statewide importance ... and an individual line item in

the budget can sustain itself."

Bombay, however, is "clearly a more localized project," he added.

Keeley said his proposal to add \$10.8 million each to the Coastal Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board on top of the governor's allocation is the best way to eventually secure the \$1 million for Bombay.

It would be up to Keeley, McPherson and local residents to persuade one or both of the conservation boards to support the allocation.

A final state budget isn't expected to be passed and signed by the governor for several weeks, said Keeley.