



Photo by Bob Smith

The retaining wall along Aptos Creek has crumpled in several places in the Rio del Mar flats.

## Rio residents want retaining wall fixed

By BOB SMITH

A group of Rio del Mar residents have been quietly lobbying state and county officials to get a damaged retaining wall near their properties repaired.

Although it may be weeks before any repair work begins along the western bank of Aptos Creek where it runs into Monterey Bay, state officials here say something will be done "as soon as possible."

The problem came to public notice Monday afternoon when three representatives from the Creek and Glen drives property owners association appealed to their "big brother" — the Rio del Mar Improvement Assn. — for political support in their fight to get the state Department of Parks and Recreation to repair the gaps in a concrete wall first constructed along the creek in the late 1920s when the mudflats were turned into a recreational development.

Sections of that wall, bordering the privately owned Creek-Glenn Drive subdivision but owned by the state parks department, were undermined by flood water in the January 4, 1982, storms and fell into the creek.

Subsequent storms have cut into the bank behind the wall, threatening sewer lines and a portion of Creek Drive.

Creek Drive representative Pat Mark told the Rio del Mar directors Monday afternoon that the property owners in the area are worried that a sewer-line manhole, now just a couple of feet from the edge of the creek bank, will be damaged in this winter's storms and will spill raw sewage into Aptos Creek.

Also threatened if there is more erosion this winter are test wells drilled earlier this year by the Soquel Creek Water District, Mark said.

Residents have already spent thousands of dollars to rebuild a bridge linking Creek and Moosehead drives. The U.S. Soil Conservation Service sponsored a quarter-million-dollar project last year to armor some of the stream banks around the Moosehead-Creek bridge and the residents contributed to that project too.

To deal with the new problem, the property owners have contacted county Supervisor Robley Levy's office and state Sen. Henry Mello.

Mrs. Levy is a director of the Santa Cruz County Sanitation District, which owns the threatened sewer line. County engineers told her that additional erosion this winter would jeopardize the sewer line. But, said sanitation engineer Tom Bolich,

the district can't spend its money to repair the wall until the sewer line is actually damaged.

The federal government has offered to pay 75 percent of the state parks department's bulkhead repair costs, estimated at \$118,250, but the remaining 25 percent has to be put up by the state.

The state did dump some riprap into a damaged area of the bulkhead downstream from the Creek Drive area, said Dick Menefee, manager of the parks department's Pajaro Coast Area unit.

Until now, the state hasn't been willing to commit the estimated \$30,000 local share for the project. But that may be changing.

A week ago Mello sent a blunt letter to William S. Briner, the new director of the parks department, asking why repair work hasn't started. Mello chastized the department for not following up on the federal government's offer to help pay for the repair work and also noted in his letter that the parks department has never formally accepted the Damage Survey Report (the claim form used to assess storm damage and apply for federal aid), filed at the request of another state agency.

Federal inspectors said the damage occurred as a result of the 1982 storms, but the parks department, Mello said in his letter, maintains that the damage is the result of the natural meanderings of the creek and is not specifically due to the 1982 storms.

"We have one agency arguing with another about when the damage occurred while the problem goes unsolved," Mello said.

Mello asked Briner to accept the DSR as the department's request for federal assistance, agree that the damage was caused by the 1982 storms, and share in the cost of the reconstruction.

A Sacramento spokeswoman for the department confirmed that Briner had received Mello's letter. No one was available today in Sacramento to comment on the issue, but Menefee, the local state parks manager, said he has been told the department will do some work there soon.

"We will be starting some repair work in there ASAP (as soon as possible)," Menefee said this morning. "But I have seen no drawings and I don't know exactly what they are going to do."