

# SC opposes development at Graham Hill Showgrounds

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SANTA CRUZ — A plan to build 60 houses at the Graham Hill Showgrounds ran into heavy opposition Wednesday from the city of Santa Cruz, which is worried about contamination of its primary water supply.

"We will use every means within our legal ability to stop this part of the project," Mayor Mike Rotkin told the county Planning Commission during a hearing on a proposed rezoning of the 170-acre property off Graham Hill Road.

County planning staff had recommended approval of the project.

The San Francisco-based S.H. Cowell Foundation, which owns the property, has been trying to gain permission to develop it for about five years. The current proposal includes plans for a fire station, a park, an equestrian trail and a sewage-treatment plant that would discharge into a leach field.

The leach field eventually would drain into the San Lorenzo River. The project is 2,000 feet upstream

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## Graham Hill homes

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from a water intake which supplies the city of Santa Cruz with about 85 percent of its water.

No decision was made at the hearing Wednesday. Planning Commissioner Denise Holbert agreed with Rotkin, and requested information from residents who are familiar with the sewage treatment system.

Rotkin said the matter was discussed in closed session by the City Council Tuesday and the vote was unanimous to oppose the project.

Rotkin was joined in his concerns by the Sierra Club Jean Allen, a longtime opponent of the proposal who has vacationed for years in nearby Paradise Park and is asking for a "not net increase in nitrates" into the San Lorenzo River.

Nitrates, from human waste,

promote growth of organic material and are a precursor to contaminants in the water, said Bill Kocher, director of the Santa Cruz City Water Department, who is also concerned about the project.

A revised environmental impact statement was presented at the hearing to a full house of equestrians and Paradise Park residents, many of whom now support the project after a series of changes that address previous concerns about erosion, species protection and land use.

The revised proposal examined several options to deal with sewage from the development. The county's deputy environmental coordinator, Kim Tschantz, said the proposal sends the sewage through primary, secondary and tertiary treatment before it goes into the leach field. He said this will present a 1.4 percent increase in ni-

trate introduction — about one pound a day.

"We believe the consultant is right when he suggests the impact is not significant. The city has a different point of view," Tschantz said.

Rotkin pleaded with the Planning Commission to reject the proposal so planners can review what he called other viable options, such as hooking the development into the Scotts Valley sewage line. Tschantz said the commission has no jurisdiction over the Scotts Valley sewage system, and that he believes Scotts Valley is not interested in accepting sewage from another city.

Rotkin said he hopes to avoid litigation, but he said the City Council is prepared to go to court if necessary.

Another hearing is scheduled in June.