

More green for greenbelt

\$1 million: Wilson restores funding toward purchase of coastal Santa Cruz pasture owners have slated for homes.

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Santa Cruz is \$1 million closer to its greenbelt goal of buying 246 acres of coastal pasture for public parkland to thwart a planned subdivision of luxury homes.

Gov. Pete Wilson agreed Friday to restore a \$1 million funding request, which he had eliminated from his \$75.4 billion budget, to help Santa

Cruz buy the land, said state Sen. Bruce McPherson, R-Santa Cruz, who lobbied Wilson for the money.

"This is glorious news," said Laura Perry, executive director of the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, which has been leading a community campaign to raise money for the purchase. "We're really fortunate to have a senator who will go to bat for protecting the environment of Santa

Cruz County."

The property, owned by the Bombay Corp. of Fresno, is an expanse of oak-studded grassland with ocean views along the city's western edge. It was earmarked by city voters for acquisition as parkland under a 1979 greenbelt initiative.

Under an agreement with the developer, the city must come up with \$3.9 million by November to buy the

land. Otherwise, city officials must consider approval of the developer's pending plans for a 25-home subdivision on the property.

Santa Cruz officials had already pledged \$1 million in city cash toward the purchase, and said they expect a \$250,000 grant. But Wilson's initial veto of the funding request, introduced by Assemblyman Fred Keeley, D-Santa Cruz, would have left the city more than \$2 million short of the developer's asking price.

"I'm happy Gov. Wilson agreed with me that there is no better time,

considering our budget surplus, to protect our precious coastal properties," McPherson said.

Even with the state funding, Santa Cruz must rely on the generosity of voters and private donors to make up the remaining \$1.65 million needed to buy the Bombay land.

A private fundraising campaign has collected \$42,000, Perry said.

City officials have placed a \$7 million bond measure on the Nov. 3 ballot for that purpose. Measure G also would raise money for renovating the city's aging fire stations, creating

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a new urban park in the South of Laurel Street district and building a new fire headquarters. The measure requires approval by two-thirds of voters.

Measure G supporters said the additional state funding will improve the measure's chances at the polls by demonstrating broad, bipartisan support for the greenbelt and allowing the city to spend more of the bond money on infrastructure improvements.

The Bombay property has been the subject of a long battle between the city and the landowners. The developers sued the city shortly after

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buying the property in 1991, challenging the agricultural zoning designation that limited its develop-

ment potential. Bombay officials had planned to build 11 homes scattered throughout the property.

After five years of litigation, Bombay officials submitted a new plan, hashed out in settlement negotiations with the city, calling for a 25-home subdivision on the lower 46 acres. Although the plan would leave 200 acres in open space, local open-space advocates oppose it as an abandonment of the city's greenbelt goals.

City officials say that if they do not buy the land or approve the 25-home plan, Bombay officials can legally build at least seven homes on the property and leave none of it as open space.