

# Park's purchase is made official

*Greenbelt*  
Santa Cruz closes escrow on 246 acres

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Santa Cruz officially acquired 246 acres of coastal uplands Tuesday, ending a 20-year battle for the property's purchase as part of a greenbelt of public park land surrounding the city.

The city closed escrow on a \$3.9 million deal to buy the land from the Bombay Corp. of Fresno, marking its largest greenbelt purchase in a decade.

"This very moment, it's public land," Santa Cruz Mayor Katherine Beiers said at a news conference on the property, gesturing toward the oaks and ocean views. "It is a city park. We're out here on this gorgeous day to celebrate."

The land will not be open to the public, however, until sometime next spring, Beiers said. City officials fear trampling by visitors during the rainy season could damage sensitive habitat and contribute to erosion, she said. In the meantime, city officials will assess sensitive areas and determine an appropriate level of public use, she said.

The purchase was made possible by \$1.65 million in Measure G bond funds approved overwhelmingly by voters Nov. 3, and by a \$1 million state appropriation. The city contributed \$1 million and received a \$250,000 state environmental enhancement grant.

Santa Cruz has been eyeing the Bombay land for two decades. Voters in 1979 identified it for acquisition under a greenbelt initiative.

But the road to purchasing the property has been rocky.

The Bombay Corp. bought the land in 1991 for a reported \$1.5 million with plans to build luxury homes

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## Greenbelt deal finalized

### ■ PARK

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there, and sued the city over its restrictive zoning the following year. The developers lost the first round in court.

With the case under appeal, Bombay Corp. began negotiating a compromise with city officials that would allow some development in exchange for leaving most of the land untouched. They proposed a 25-home subdivision, which exceeded current zoning, in exchange for giving 200 acres to a land trust for preservation. A majority of council members

supported the proposal at the time, saying the city could not afford to buy the land for Bombay's price — then \$3.35 million. But public opposition was so strong that the council agreed to put a bond measure on the ballot and pledged \$1 million toward the purchase.

Measure G, which authorized \$7 million in bonds for the Bombay purchase, fire station improvements and a new urban park, was approved by three-fourths of city voters.

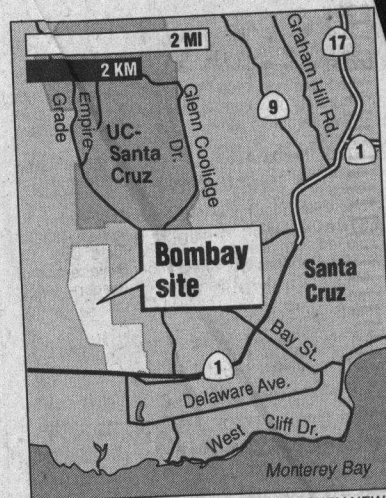
The state's \$1 million contribution initially was stricken from the budget by Gov. Pete Wilson. But a bipartisan effort by Assemblyman Fred Keeley,

D-Santa Cruz, and state Sen. Bruce McPherson, R-Santa Cruz, pushed it through.

"We went two laps around the track," said Keeley, the Assembly's new speaker pro tem, who joined Beiers for the ceremony.

The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County will manage 85 acres of the property along Moore Creek Canyon. Its management responsibilities for the land may later be expanded under agreement with the city.

"It's a beautiful piece of land," said Inge Huala, a neighbor who strolled the property with her husband, Waldemar, and 3-year-old grandson,



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Nicholas Clark, during Tuesday's ceremony.