

Boardwalk plans for temporary zip line

Amusement park
looking to operate line
for spring break visitors

By JASON HOPPIN

jhoppin@santacruzsentinel.com

SANTA CRUZ — Spring break visitors to the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk will have a new attraction to thrill them — a 300-foot zip line over Main Beach.

The line, which would run between temporary structures, is the second new zip line planned for California's coastline. The other, slated for a summer rotation in Venice Beach, met with controversy earlier this month when neighbors voiced their objections to the state Coastal Commission.

"Our focus is, ideally, working with parks and protected areas," said Ian Green, a spokesman for Canada-based GreenHeart, which modeled its Venice Beach proposal after a Burning Man exhibit. "If you do it the right way, it can be incredibly successful. If you do it haphazard, that's what it'll be."

The two new lines and an existing attraction on the island city of Avalon all emphasize a growing way for people visiting the California coast to both get a thrill and view nature in a unique manner. While not universally popular — one proposed for Monterey's Jacks Peak Park has been dogged by controversy for years — the Boardwalk's has not drawn public resistance.

Los Angeles officials plan to use Venice Beach's 750-foot lines to generate funds for park operations. Plans include aerial performances, and though set along a world-famous beach front, some Venice neighbors objected that the project would draw too many people and be out of character.

"To turn it into an amusement park, I just don't see it serving anyone," one woman testified.

No such problem in Santa Cruz — Main Beach already has an amusement park. Boardwalk spokesman Kris Reyes said the line likely would be tucked behind the Sky Glider attraction, though not be as tall.

"It'll provide really great views of the coast," Reyes said.

The city of Santa Cruz is responsible for approving the project. City officials did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

Santa Cruz County residents might be familiar with zip lines through a long-standing attraction near the Mount Hermon Christian Conference Center. For years, they've been a popular way for ecotourists to see Costa Rican rainforests or remote mountains in the Philippines.

Their popularity in the U.S. seems to be increasing. Las Vegas' draws now include a zip line over Fremont Street (which has also raised \$270,000 for charities). A zip line on Catalina Island races passengers through Descanso Canyon and down to the beach.

Backers say they are a nearly footprint-free way for people to

ZIP LINE

Continued from B1

experience nature, while opponents worry about their impact on views or birds. In many countries, zip lines also help provide funding for poor nations relying on ecotourism to bring in outside dollars.

"This is the most minimal impact trail you're going to

get, compared to a ground trail or a bike trail," Green said.

The Boardwalk's zip lines are being supplied by Penryn-based Extreme Engineering, a supplier of amusement equipment but not a company prominently involved in ecotourism.

Follow Sentinel reporter
Jason Hoppin on Twitter
at Twitter.com/scnewsdude