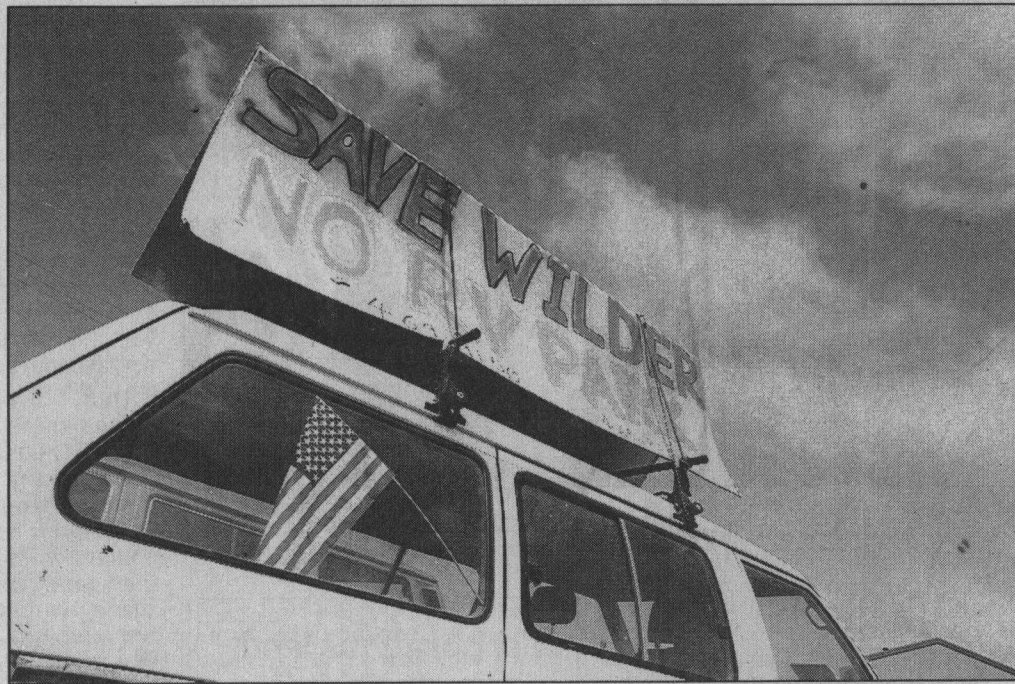


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Wilder Ranch

# County OK required for RV park?

## Boost for project foes



A van at the Wilder Ranch State Park parking lot, right, carries a sign opposing a proposed RV park. A team of horses, below, pulls a wagon loaded with hay.

KAREN T. BORCHERS —  
MERCURY NEWS

BY JOHN WOOLFOLK  
Mercury News Staff Writer

Local officials may yet have a say in the controversial plan to build the state's largest recreational vehicle park in a quarry on Santa Cruz County's rural north coast.

In a blow to quarry owner Graniterock Inc. and the state Department of Parks and Recreation, partners in the plan, the California Coastal Commission's legal staff has said the campground must have county approval.

Park officials had maintained that the county has no authority over the development because it would become part of the surrounding Wilder Ranch State Park, which falls under state jurisdiction.

But in a July 26 letter, Coastal Commission attorney Diane Landry said that is not so.

"In this case, the appropriate procedure for securing the necessary development permits is to apply to the county of Santa Cruz, which has jurisdiction over the granite site," Landry said in the letter.

The letter was a boost to project foes, including county Supervisor Mardi Wormhoudt, whose district includes the quarry. Opponents were outraged when told

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# RV park project up in air

■ **WILDER**

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earlier that the project's fate rested solely in the hands of appointed state officials — the parks and coastal commissions.

"I'm elated," Wormhoudt said. "It will give local people who are greatly concerned about the future of Wilder Ranch an opportunity to be heard by people accountable to local citizens. To me, that's an enormous difference."

State parks planner Roger Calloway was stunned and said the department will consult its own attorneys. If county approval is required, he said, it would delay the project at least a year.

"I really don't know what we'll do at this point," said Calloway, who had expected to submit plans to the Coastal Commission for approval by the end of the year. "I know there will be a lot of disappointed windsurfers and campers who want to see the campground developed."

The proposed campground would provide hookups for up to 380 RVs, and would include a restaurant, heated pool, amphitheater, recreation hall, 160-bed dormitory and horseback riding areas. The largest RV park in the state system now is Lake Perris in Riverside County, with 265 campsites.

State park officials say the project will remove earlier plans for 280 campsites and an 80-bed hostel from the scenic coastal bluffs along Highway 1, a mile north of Santa Cruz, and concentrate camping in the quarry.

But many residents say it will replace earlier plans calling for low-impact tent camping with a small city of five-ton vehicles equipped with living rooms and satellite dishes.

"I'm certainly not opposed to camping," Wormhoudt said. "My main concern continues to be the intensity of this project."

Supervisor Fred Keely had similar concerns.

"This would be the largest coastal development between Santa Cruz and Half Moon Bay, and in what is essentially a rural, low-density part of the county," Keely said. "I think it's going to be important to evaluate all the impacts of the project."

Supervisor Jan Beautz was on vacation, and supervisors Ray

Belgard and Walter Symons were unavailable.

The deal between state parks and Graniterock calls for the company to deed the 300-acre quarry to the state with a lease-back agreement to run the 100-acre campground for 35 years. After that, the campground also would be turned over to the state.

Coastal Commission attorney Landry said the arrangement does not fit the definition of a "public work" and must therefore have county permits, as with other private enterprises. That the \$3 million project will be privately funded and that sand mining will continue after the campground is built disqualify the project, she said.

Calloway suggested the department may be able to satisfy the commission's concerns if Graniterock deeds the entire project to the state now.

The letter is the latest setback for Graniterock and state park officials. Last month, the Santa Cruz City Council voted to deny water for the campground — throwing a wrench into draft plans that assumed city water would be available.

Bowing to public outcry, park officials have already suggested scaling back their original plans. A draft environmental impact report being circulated for public comment recommends seeking approval for only 260 of the 380 proposed campsites.



KAREN T. BORCHERS — MERCURY NEWS

Riding bikes through the Wilder Ranch land are Scott and Stephanie McClellan of Sunnyvale. They said they are opposed to building an RV park.