

# Gray Whale Ranch purchase a done deal

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SANTA CRUZ — The sale of the Gray Whale Ranch is final.

The non-profit Save-the-Redwoods League closed escrow on the purchase of the 2,349-acre North Coast property last week. The local community, however, must still raise \$600,000 to hold up its end of the bargain.

The local contribution is essential to the deal, which could open the park for public use by late spring.

To reach the goal, the Environmental Council and its offshoot Open Space Alliance of Santa Cruz County will host a benefit Friday, Jan. 24.

"It's important for the community," said Mary Tsalis, executive director of the alliance. "First of all, it's an opportunity for community members to come together to learn about the critical habitats of Santa Cruz County in addition to that of Gray Whale. Second, it's an opportunity to raise the remaining \$600,000."

So far, about \$30,000 has been raised locally.

Save-the-Redwoods League officials said they are pleased with the progress of the campaign. The sale price of the property is confidential, but is reported to be around \$12.7 million.

The group plans to turn over the

property to the state parks system.

Even though the sale is final, the land remains closed until state parks officially opens Gray Whale.

The fund-raising event is the first for Gray Whale held by the Open Space Alliance.

The dessert party will feature Kenneth Norris, UC Santa Cruz professor emeritus of natural history, speaking on the preservation of habitats. There will be a slide show featuring the photographs of Frans Lanting, Frank Balthis, Jodi Frediani, Gary Woodard and others.

The Gray Whale Ranch sits between UC Santa Cruz and Wilder Ranch State

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Park. Previously owned by rancher Ron Yanke, it includes more than 1,000 acres of second-growth redwoods and is home to an assortment of wildlife from mountain lions to the endangered red-legged frog.

*The Outrageous Dessert Party will be at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 24, at the Loud-en Nelson Center, Room 3, Laurel and Center streets, Santa Cruz. Tickets are \$7 in advance and \$8 at the door. Call 426-2286 for ticket information.*

*A Manitou mountain bike will be auctioned at the event. The list price is \$2,800, and the minimum bid is \$1,000. All proceeds benefit the Gray Whale Ranch purchase.*