

Kilns to get relief



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

The kilns of Pogonip are estimated to have been built in the 1840s by the owners of Cowell Ranch.

SC council approves removal of redwoods from atop kilns

By KAREN CLARK
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SANTA CRUZ — In a distinctly Santa Cruz version of sticks and stones at City Hall Tuesday night, stones won.

Council members decided to preserve the century-old lime kilns at the northwestern portion of the Pogonip by cutting eight second-growth redwoods and a fir tree.

The trees have been pushing out the crumbling kilns for decades, and have reached the point, according to experts, where either they had to go or the kilns would be destroyed.

"Ample evidence has been given that the kilns are a rare and historic resource," said Councilwoman Cynthia Mathews. "The rate of decay is accelerating. Soon the kilns will become so unstable they'll fall and destroy the trees, too."

Mathews was among the six council members who supported removing the trees to protect the kilns, which are

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estimated to have been built in the 1840s by the owners of Cowell Ranch.

Only Councilwoman Celia Scott spoke on behalf of the trees, which she described as having as much right to exist as the kilns.

"We must find a balance between the works of human beings and the works of nature," said Scott, who worried that the unstable kilns would be destroyed in the process of removing

the trees, causing a double loss.

Some of the trees that will be removed actually are growing through holes in the walls of the kilns. Several residents asked the council to preserve that tableau as a clear representation of nature and man-made structures living in harmony.

But others told the council that the rate of decay on the kilns was accelerating, and it was unrealistic to hope that the harmonic display of nature and kilns would continue for much longer.

Councilwoman Mary Beth Campbell pointed out that preserving the kilns is a debt owed future generations.

"There will be a time when people won't know what lime kilns were," she said. "This is a piece of history significant enough to do more than document it with pictures."

In the mid- to late 1800s, Santa Cruz County was the lime capital of the

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