

# Building restrictions may protect butterflies

By KEITH MURAOKA  
Sentinel staff writer

CAPITOLA — A significant Monarch butterfly wintering site along the cliffs on Depot Hill may result in several unique building restrictions should five proposed homes be approved.

The application by Robert Blodgett, son of El Salto Resort owner Elizabeth Blodgett, involves five new single-family residences on 1.3 acres at the end of Escalona Drive, adjacent to the now-closed resort in the Depot Hill neighborhood.

A draft environmental impact report was ordered for the project,

since it is within an environmentally sensitive Monarch butterfly wintering site, said Assistant Planner Bob Rivers. The application is expected to come before the Planning Commission later this month.

Monarchs are one of a few butterfly species that live long enough to migrate. Between 1 and 5 million Monarchs overwinter in colonies throughout California. Monarchs migrate amid groves of eucalyptus, pine or cypress trees in which the butterflies gather together, forming "shingles" for protection.

The building restrictions that may be forthcoming were outlined in an environmental impact report prepared by John Gilchrist and As-

sociates.

Those restrictions include limiting construction to just one house a year in order to monitor the effects on the Monarch colony, which have been estimated as averaging 32,000. Other mitigations include limiting two of the proposed home sites to one-story, or 18 feet, so as not to shade an adjacent cluster of

eucalyptus trees that are used by the butterflies, and prohibiting wood-burning stoves in four of the five houses.

The butterflies may be disturbed by either shade or smoke, said the environmental report. Shading from two-story homes could hinder the clusters in which the Monarchs could form over winter, while

smoke could be irritating and cause them to drop off the clusters.

As proposed, the new homes will result in the removal of more than 30 trees. However, none of the so-called "cluster area trees" will be lost, the report noted. Those cluster area trees provide much of the wind protection for the Monarch habitat.