

Friends of Wilder volunteers deciding whether to disband

By ERIN K. QUIRK
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SANTA CRUZ — The Friends of Wilder Ranch has a problem.

The non-profit organization has money but not enough people to keep up its volunteer work at the historic North Coast ranch. On Wednesday night, the group will decide whether or not to disband after at least 15 years of service.

"We take care of the projects the state can't afford to do or aren't a priority," said event coordinator Joan Clements. "There is such a tremendous interest in Wilder, the way people fought to keep Wilder wild ... you'd think there would be five or six people out there who want to help."

Since the mid-'80s, Friends of Wilder has spent \$46,000 on purchases and restoration of the ranch, Clements said. Each year the group submits a budget to the Friends of the Santa Cruz State Parks. It also holds barbecues to raise money for work projects. Currently the group has \$15,000 in its coffers but not enough bodies to help with the maintenance projects or even run more fund-raisers.

The group was founded to help restore and maintain Wilder's historical buildings and grounds. The



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on-going restoration project at the cowboy cottage is almost finished and has taken \$6,000 and four years to complete. Clements said the Friends of Wilder began restoring the building on their own but didn't have enough time to complete it. They now fund such projects, and State Parks does the work.

The next major project the group would like to tackle, if it stays together, is the restoration of the Bolcoff Adobe. Clements said the work is important because if someone doesn't get after it, such buildings will not be there for future generations to enjoy.

"We really need people to help us do these projects," she said.

If the group gets a bigger volunteer base, Clements also hopes to

put on another Poker Ride fundraiser. At last year's Poker Ride, locals took their horses out for an extended trail ride at the ranch. There were five stops, and at each one riders got a playing card. Whoever had the best hand at the end of the ride won. Clements said Friends of Wilder had secured thousands of dollars in donated prizes.

Clements said the group only meets once a month and working at Wilder Ranch has incredible restorative powers.

"It's like getting your own personal battery recharged."

For more information call Clements at 438-8616 or show up at the meeting 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Visitor Center at Natural Bridges State Beach.