

Money for Grey Whale Ranch cut

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SANTA CRUZ — Activists hoping for state purchase of the Grey Whale Ranch were served another setback Monday when Gov. George Deukmejian cut \$50,000 from a bill aimed at acquiring the land. *

The bill, SB 2621, by state Sen. Henry Mello, D-Watsonville, was approved by both houses before reaching the governor's desk. Mello sought \$50,000 for the State Coastal Conservancy to oversee acquisition efforts concerning the ranch.

Deukmejian sliced the appropriation from the bill, saying it was "unneces-

sary because the Coastal Conservancy's budget already contains funding for projects of this type."

The scenic, 2,400-acre ranch near UC Santa Cruz has been the focus of controversy for two years, as activists have urged the state to buy the land for a state park and the ranch owner has tried to cut timber and build homes there.

Despite the governor's veto of the allocation, the Coastal Conservancy is still very interested in the property, and "stands at the ready to fulfill any role in resolving the conflict over the ranch," according to conservancy project manager Julia McIver.

Mello vowed to keep pushing for acquisition of the ranch "as long as there's a widespread grassroots support" for a state park on the site.

"I carried the bill because I want to see it purchased," Mello said. "Fortunately the Coastal Conservancy still has money in their budget to follow this project."

Mello and Assemblyman Sam Farr, D-Carmel, have been seeking purchase money for the ranch for two years, but the state's ongoing budget crisis has made that task difficult. Farr authored a bill seeking \$10 million for the ranch this year, but the bill "went nowhere" because of budget concerns, a Mello

aide said.

A request for several million dollars last year was whittled down to \$300,000 before approval, and is the only money secured for the purchase so far. A recent proposal to boost the county sales tax would have raised money to buy the ranch, along with other parks. But the proposal proved to be unpopular and was quickly dropped.

The ranch was placed on the market two years ago for \$11 million, but is currently not for sale. Owners, Ron and Linda Yanke, now hope to build about 70 homes and donate large portions of the land to the UCSC nature reserve and a charitable trust.