

Zayante

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Inspiring

Tan oaks tower above sword fern and redwood sorrel in the Fall Creek unit of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. For more photos by Valley Press photographer A.V. Pike, see pages 22-23.

Zayante dam

Concerns over report on dam site

A government geologist has taken a cursory look at a consultant's report on the proposed Zayante dam site and has criticized it for omitting the dangers of landslides and possible earthquake damage.

The geologist, Earl E. Brabb of the United States Department of the Interior, stressed in his letter he made only a "brief examination" of the report and that he was not speaking for the government.

The City of Santa Cruz commissioned the San Francisco-based firm of Woodward-Clyde Associates to study seismic activity along the proposed Zayante dam site, located 2,500 feet downstream from Mountain Charlie and Zayante creeks. It is also located 600 feet from the Zayante-Vergales fault and 3.6 miles from the San Andreas fault.

The report noted the land is on a seismically active fault zone where an earthquake with a magnitude of five on the Richter scale could happen and an earthquake with a Richter scale of 8.5 could be considered in building an "earthquake-proof" dam. This would add 30 to 40 percent to the cost, the report said.

A copy of the report was sent to Brabb by Boulder Creek environmentalist Al Haynes.

Brabb sent back a letter which said in part, "I am not satisfied with the analysis of the possible surface rupture to the dam by movement along the Zayante fault...the actual width of the rupture is highly speculative."

More surface rupture than calculated could result in failure of the dam, said the letter.

Brabb also said the study omits discussion of landslides, does not mention the effects of swelling clays on the dam's foundation and does not discuss the dam's possible effects on beaches.

However, these problems were not intended to be studied by the firm, said John McGuire, superintendent of operations for the City of Santa Cruz Water Department.

The study meant only to look at seismic activity and the dam's feasibility. Study of landslides and the other design features is in the works, said McGuire.

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