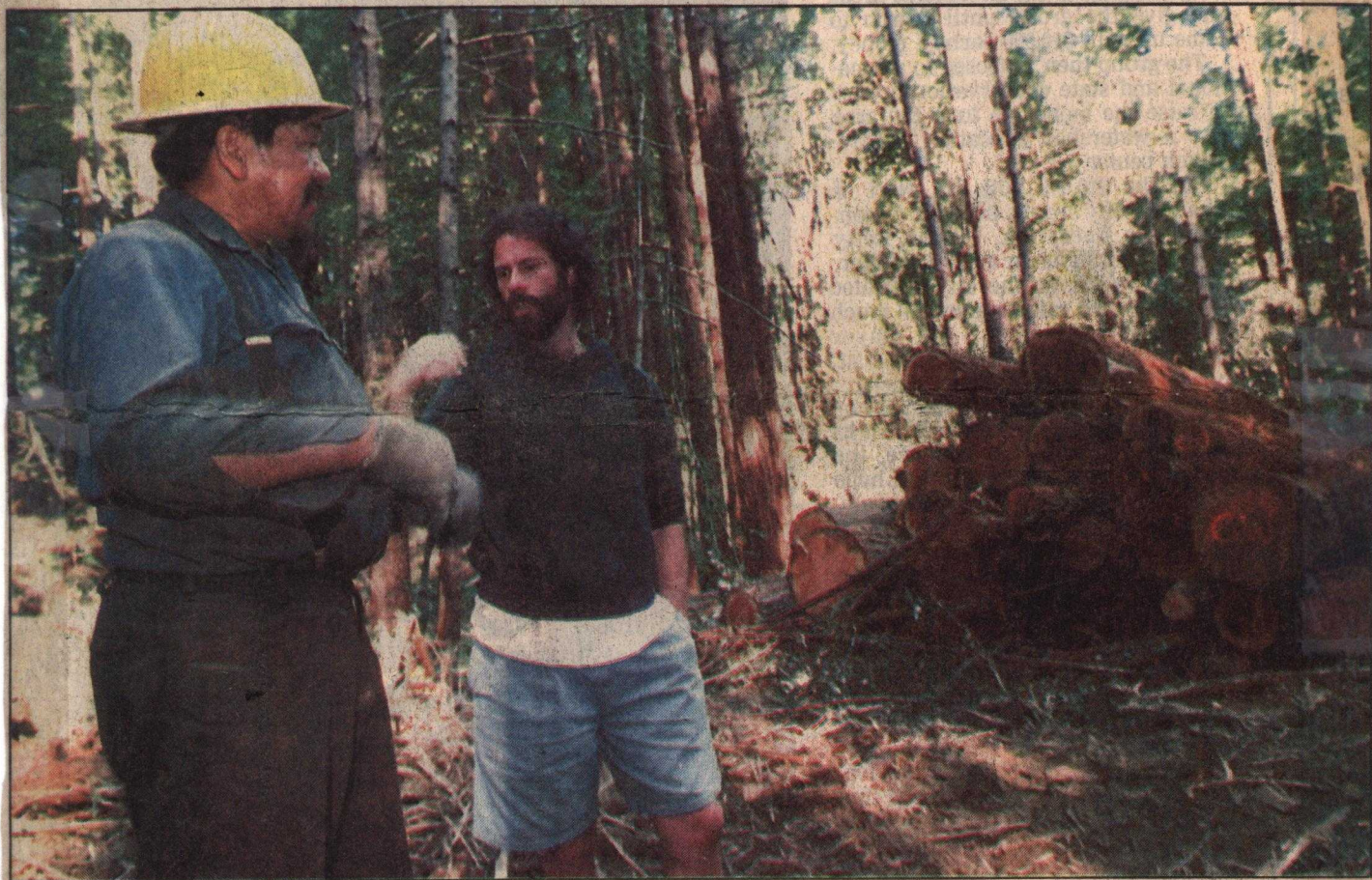


# Logging begins at Grizzly Flat



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Logger Virgil Graham talks with logging opponent Marty Abaurrea at Grizzly Flat Friday.

## City says controversial project will bring in needed money

By TRACY L. BARNETT  
Sentinel staff writer

CORRALITOS — Two years after the original plan was filed, the chain saws are finally buzzing at Grizzly Flat.

Loggers are ending Phase I of the controversial project, which was originally intended to bring \$250,000 to city coffers this year and a similar amount next year. But lawsuits tied the case up in court until last month, giving the city just over three weeks this year before the timber season ends Tuesday.

Since operations began about three weeks ago, Graham's Tree Service of Coarsegold has cut about 10 truckloads of trees in the area, each of them comprising between 14 and 20 of the enormous redwoods. There will be time for about three more truckloads, netting the city less than \$100,000.

Virgil Graham and his son, Sam, ran their family operation on the steep slopes above Shingle Mill Creek Friday, one by one cutting the trees marked with

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— Jon Silver,  
logging opponent

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blue spray. So far, all cutting has taken place well away from creeks, as ordered by the city, which is staying clear of potential red-legged frog habitat.

"Regardless of whether we're doing this or not, there are going to be mudslides," remarked Virgil Graham, an affable and philosophical logger. "I think Mother Nature will take care of that, as well as it has in the past."

He referred to a steep grade scored by skid marks and scattered with the remains of several trees.

Jon Silver, an outspoken opponent of the logging, saw the scene differently.

"The city was saying that logging was not going to be done on steep slopes, and clearly that's not the case," he said. "You can already see the potential for erosion. They're cutting trees on these steep slopes, and this stuff is probably going to work its way down into the waterways."

Silver went up into the area armed with his camera and accompanied by about a half-dozen other logging opponents who plan to monitor the project. In addition, the Coastal Watershed Council plans monitor water in Corralitos Creek, which feeds the drinking-water supply for the Pajaro Valley.

"This used to be a lovely little glade," said a saddened Harold Short, looking around at a 100-foot clearing that has been made into a loading area.

Short, who lives nearby off of Eureka Canyon Road, has been listening to the

chain saws for the past few weeks and is frustrated with opponents' inability to stop the logging. His group, the Coalition for Responsible Forest Management, has filed suit against the city, but the courts ruled this summer that unless the group put up a \$100,000 bond, the city could proceed.

Another group, the Pajaro Valley Water Coalition, has proposed to raise the money to buy conservation easements along the land's waterways and unique wetlands area. An official proposal submitted last month suggested that the city hold off on logging in the streamside areas and give the group until March to come up with \$10,000 earnest money.

The group then proposed to ask national and state conservation groups to raise the money to turn the area into a watershed education and research center.

But the \$10,000 falls far short of what the city would need to discontinue the operation, Mayor Betty Bobeda told Silver in an Oct. 3 letter.

"As you know, the city initiated this plan ... to raise money for much needed city services," the mayor wrote. "The challenge at Grizzly Flat, however environmentally sensitive in nature, is dwarfed in comparison to the challenges facing the city in its efforts to address the violence, the unemployment and the lack of hope in our community."

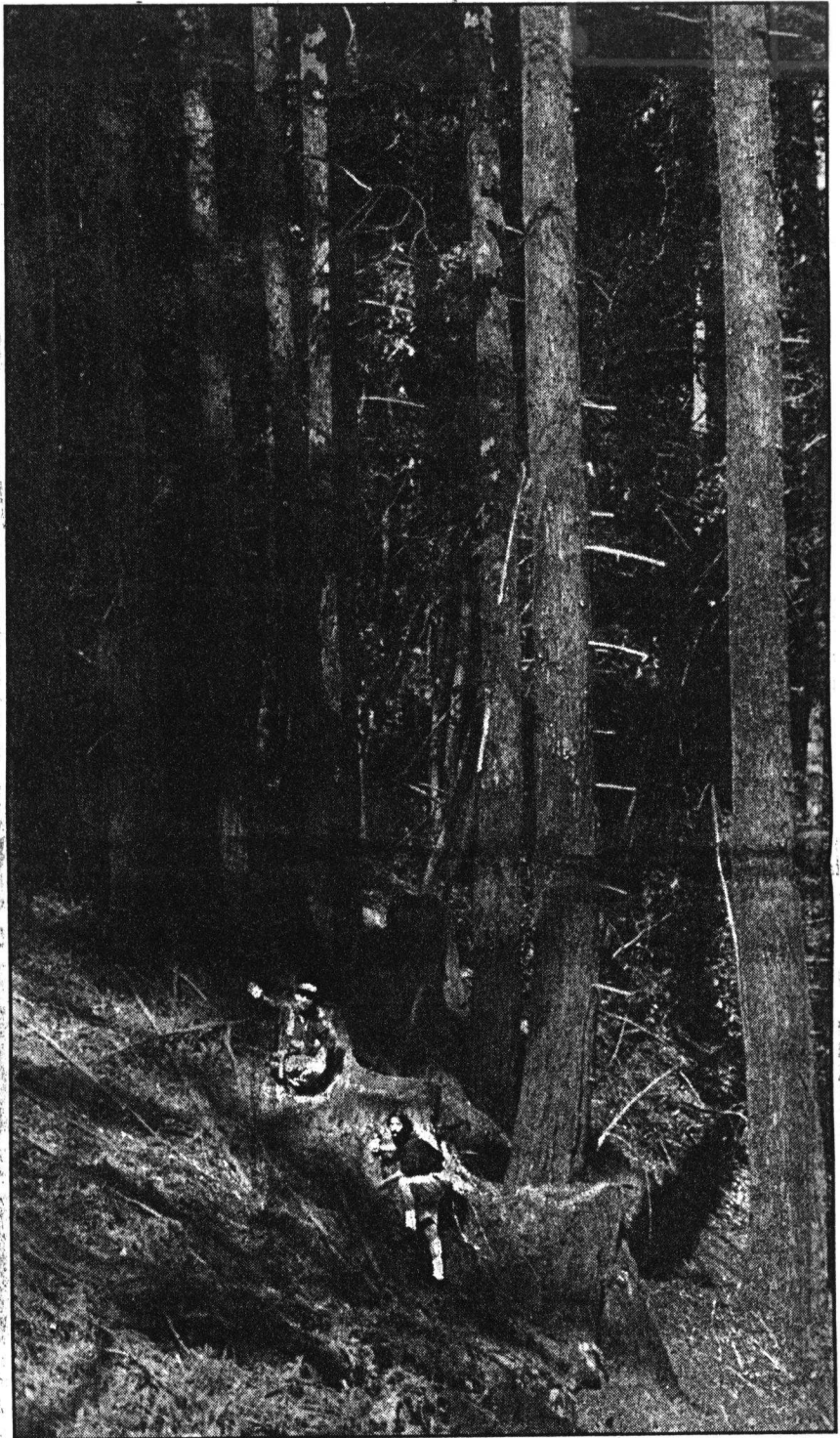
The City Council approved a \$330,000 package of violence-prevention measures Thursday night, in part to be funded from revenues from the logging.

"It is my sincere hope that you and the members of your group can direct your efforts toward helping us solve these complex problems," Bobeda wrote.

But to Silver, Short and other logging opponents, the city's use of timber in a critical watershed that has already been heavily logged is an error in judgment.

"This property was acquired by the city to protect the watershed, and as recently as a few years ago, the city recommended against other logging projects that were going on in this watershed," Silver said. "It seems irresponsible to compromise our water supply for short-term gain."

City officials maintain that the selective harvest is being done in an environmentally sensitive manner. Indeed, the contractor brought in to do the logging — a tiny, family-owned firm that specializes in hard-to-log areas and sensitive tree removals — seems intent in doing just that, with plans to build barriers to divert any erosion from the streams. Virgil Graham said he's had extensive conversations with city employees about staying out of potential red-legged



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Logging opponents Jon Silver and Marty Abaurrea survey the beginning of logging at Grizzly Flat.

frog habitat.

But the city has not yet decided who will complete the job, and opponents are worried a less careful firm will come in next year and complete the work in a manner consistent with other nearby logging operations, which have resulted in mudslides and severe erosion in area creeks.

And they see the uplands wetland area as the ideal site for something

more sustainable than a logging operation.

"Walking around up there, you see how beautiful it is, and there are many potential opportunities for us to take advantage of this as an environmental location that people can go and use and enjoy while protecting our watershed," said Silver. "There are also ways there can be some economic viability to the area that does not include damaging the watershed."