

Governor Targets Coastal Commission

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Deukmejian proposes \$3 million in budget cuts from the regulatory agency

GOVERNOR GEORGE DEUKMEJIAN this week took steps to dismantle the Coastal Commission and place authority over off-shore oil leasing in his own office. The governor proposed \$3 million in budgetary cutbacks for the commission, which oversees coastal development and reviews leases up to three miles off the California shore.

The cutbacks would slash 41 of 171 staff positions, the result leaving the commission terribly weakened, according to State Senator Henry Mello (D-Watsonville). The commission's current budget is \$9.4 million.

Locally, the cuts may create a logjam in the planning process, said Edward Brown, area director of the Coastal Commission.

"These cuts threaten our mandated responsibility to regulate development of the shoreline," he said.

That responsibility includes helping the cities of Santa Cruz, Watsonville, and Capitola implement local coastal programs required by state law. Brown said that without the commission's technical assistance in examining projects for environmental impacts, local planning agencies could be forced to take up the slack.

One of Deukmejian's campaign promises was to abolish the Coastal Commission. The legislature's decision on the governor's budget is expected later this summer. •