

# Coast Dairies deal may get state help

*Davenport*  
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A multibillion-dollar state surplus has infused lawmakers and preservationists with hope for completing the purchase of Coast Dairies this summer.

Sen. Bruce McPherson, R-Santa Cruz, and Assemblyman Fred Keeley, D-Boulder Creek, are heading a bipartisan effort to secure state funding for the remaining \$5 million needed to purchase the North Coast property.

"I'm very optimistic," said McPherson, noting the \$4.4 billion budget surplus. "It's the right year to do it, comparatively."

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"There's no question that this is a top priority. Just about every environmental agency in the state recognizes the importance of this piece of property."

Long sought by preservationists, Coast Dairies is one of the three largest coastal properties between the Golden Gate Bridge and the Mexican border still owned privately.

An option on the 7,500 acres was purchased in September by the San Francisco-based group, Save the Redwoods League.

The property includes 7.4 miles of shoreline, six beaches and their watersheds, historic limestone mining and agricultural land.

The town of Davenport sits in the middle of it.

Eventually, the league hopes to link the property to Wilder Ranch, Big Basin and Ano Nuevo state parks. Inland trails may also become available linking the deep-walled canyons to three levels of coastal marine terraces and the beaches.

The land was owned for years by a group of Swiss dairy farmers who, when they returned to their native land in 1913, continued to lease portions of it to graze cattle and grow crops, mostly Brussels sprouts and artichokes. Another 400 acres is being mined for shale by RMC

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Dan Coyro/Sentinel file

The 7,500 acres stretches more than 7 miles along the coast.

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Lonestar.

Heirs of the Swiss farmers have tried to sell the property since the 1970s. They came close in 1996 when a group of out-of-state developers obtained an option and applied to the county to subdivide the land for development.

Save the Redwoods bought out the developers in September and secured major contributions for all but about \$5 million needed for the deal.

The Trust for Public Land now owns the stock option and will become the owner when the option is exercised, said Ann Cole, project manager at the Trust for Public

Land.

The option expires Sept. 30, said Leo McElroy, spokesman for the public-private fund-raising effort.

The groups involved have declined to disclose the purchase price. Published reports have estimated the cost at \$40 million.

The bulk of the money, \$20 million, has come from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and contributions from anonymous private donors. The California Coastal Conservancy and the Save the Redwoods League.

Another \$1 million was secured by Keeley and McPherson on the last day of the legislative session last year on an addendum to the state budget.

The public-private project has leveraged private donations equal to \$6 for every \$1 invested by the

state, McElroy said. "Now it's just a case of saying to the state, 'You've got to do your share, too,'" he said.

Keeley and McPherson have submitted budget requests for the \$5 million. Keeley's request went to the Assembly budget subcommittee Tuesday, but has not been acted on. McPherson's is scheduled to go before the Senate budget subcommittee Wednesday.

The lawmakers and representatives of others also will participate in a press conference Saturday morning in Davenport to highlight the effort. Among participants are Robert Stephens of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation; William Ahern of the California Coastal Conservancy; Reed Holderman of the Trust for Public Land; and Mardi Wormhoudt, county Board of Supervisors.