



Ocean winds ruffle the spring's green grass of Wilder Ranch that cover miles of meadowlands surrounding the historic dairy farm.

Wilder Ranch State Park Planning Is Under Way

By PAUL BEATTY
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Wilder Ranch—more than 3,850 acres of rolling coastal hills and silent meadowlands that once seemed destined to be a sister city to Santa Cruz — has entered its planning process to become a state park.

State government officials are in Santa Cruz and will conduct a series of meetings with interested citizens to prepare a "general plan" that is expected to go before the California Parks Commission in the latter part of 1979.

"Some of the suggestions so far,"

said Roger Calloway of state parks, "include youth hostels, campgrounds, a 10-acre motorcycle park, two proposals from UCSC to establish a predatory bird sanctuary, and a proposal from the county to use some land here as a septic tank dumping ground."

The latter proposal was made recently when the county was denied further septic dumping privileges at the city dump. State parks officials dampened the proposal by basically asking the county "are you crazy?"

The full range of proposals and citizen ideas is expected to come forth at the first public hearing on park planning set for May 18 at 7:30 p.m. at Natural Bridges School.

Calloway said that the meeting will be the first of a series, all to be held in Santa Cruz to aid his department in drawing its general plan for acceptance by the state commission.

To give citizens a feeling for the ranch — its wealth of landscape and historic building — the ranch will be opened to the public next Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

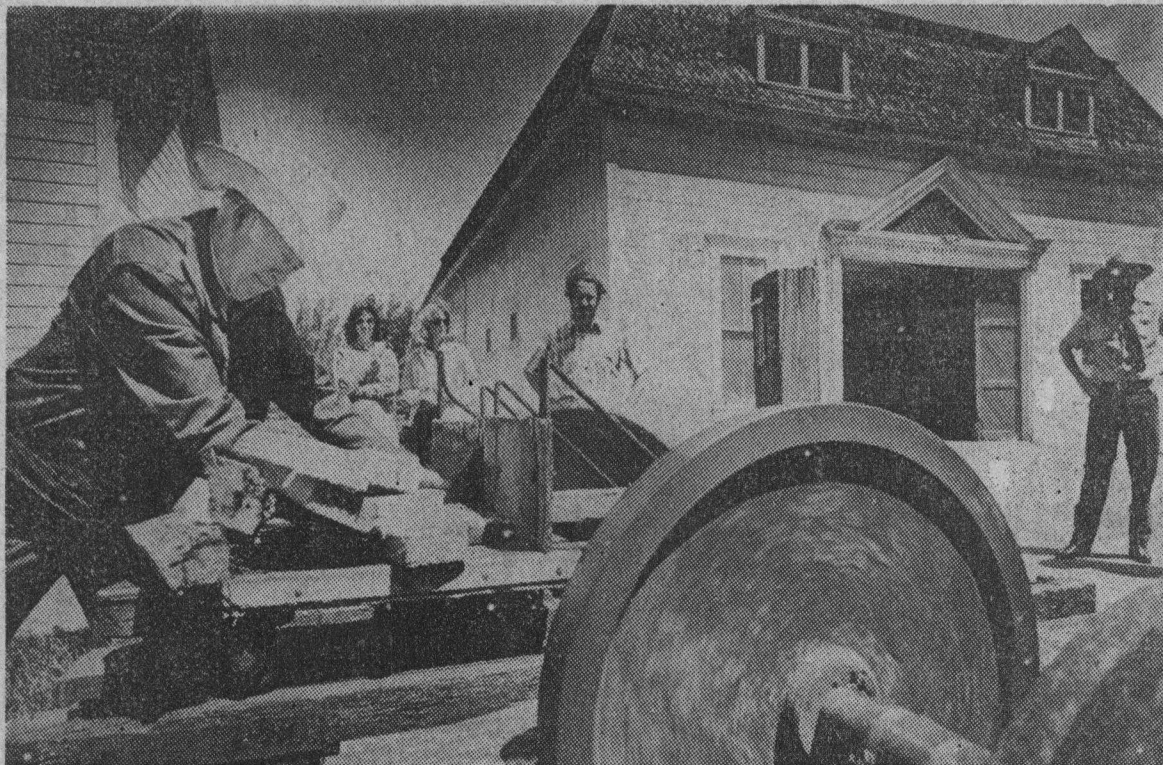
It is located about two miles north of Santa Cruz, off Highway 1, and access is made via a small road on the west side of the coastal highway.

Wilder Ranch was founded more than a century ago.

In 1971 and 1972, the ranch, which has a four mile frontage along the coast, was proposed as a major residential addition to Santa Cruz, with early population projects running to 50,000 people.

Plans included major commercial development on the seaward side, and large neighborhoods of housing with projects up to over 10,000 units.

The timing was disastrous, from the development point of view, as the



Led Engelsman, Wilder ranch foreman for 48 years, demonstrates the Pelton wheel saw.

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A small creek ripples its way past the Wilder Ranch barn, a reminder of the importance of flowing water to the early dairy farmers.

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major project hit Santa Cruz County in its early era of environmentalism.

Environmentalists eagerly joined the battle, fighting it out with the project managers and bringing the case before local officials.

The final battle was won — developers said later — with the passage of Proposition 20, the Coastal Act in November, 1972.

Subsequently, the park was purchased by the state for over \$3 million, and with projected additions, could come to a \$4 million purchase.

Calloway sees the open house next

weekend as "the beginning of the planning process" and notes the "park will not be open for the next several years."

Visitors will see a rare collection of early dairy tools and machinery that will become part of a museum on the property in future years.

The Wilder Ranch includes 24,000 linear feet of ocean frontage and 3,864 acres of farm and grazing land. It extends to an elevation of about 850 feet at its hills near UCSC.

A successful dairy farm and creamer from 1885, the ranch became

part of the state park system in 1974.

During its dairy operation, four generations of the Wilder family operated it as one of the most progressive dairy ranches along the coast.

Its source of power was Meder Creek, and with the use of a two-foot Pelton wheel, which still remains, a dynamo was powered to run all the farm machinery and later to provide the ranch with the first electric lights in Santa Cruz. Originally, the Pelton wheel powered the machinery through direct transfer of water-

power, ranch foreman Led Engelsman notes.

Engelsman, who has been on the ranch for 48 years, remains there to preserve the historic structures and equipment now the state parks owns the property.

Most of the original buildings remain, including the 20-room ranch house and a Spanish adobe house that has been dated anyway from 1781 to 1827.

Signs will guide visitors to the ranch next weekend, and about 100 parking spaces will be available.