

City may scrub fake seaweed

Capitola's controversial plan to build a beach by planting rows of artificial seaweed is being put on hold.

In a report that will be discussed Thursday night by the Capitola City Council, Asst. Planner Susan Tupper is recommending that installation of the material, trademarked "Seascape" by its distributors, wait until this fall.

And unless there is information coming in the next couple of months that indicates the material works better than present information now shows at building a beach, the project might be abandoned altogether.

"My recommendation," said Tupper, "is that we look into all of the other options of correcting the cliff erosion and come up with the cost figures for them. We can leave the synthetic seaweed option open for the next couple of months if we

find some new information, but we should explore the other options to see if they are a more viable, long term solution."

The city had planned to install the artificial seaweed in a 1,500-foot-long area in front of the crumbling Grand Avenue cliffs. The project would have cost \$160,000 with the city paying \$75,000. The remainder would have come from property owners who now face damage to their property or loss of access to their homes from Grand Avenue.

The seaweed-like material has been installed in the city of Long Beach and in the Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Reports from those areas, by the city of Long Beach and the Army Corps of Engineers, indicate there has been no buildup of beach sand in those areas.

Initial reports showed that the installation was working, but

part of that optimism may have come from the large amount of sand dredged and piled on beaches before the seaweed was installed.

Capitola had originally planned to install the seaweed this spring, but even if a decision is made to go ahead with the project after looking at all of the alternatives, Tupper wants the city to wait until fall.

The sand that would be trapped by the seaweed in front of the cliffs would come from the "littoral" drift of sand down the coast.

Studies show that approximately 302,000 cubic yards of sand drift past Capitola each year. But the summertime flow diminishes to the point that it would be impossible to extract any sand from it, Tupper added.

Any sand trapped in front of the Grand Avenue cliffs would have a temporary effect on beaches further downcoast.