

Plan unveiled to keep Porter Sesnon pristine

By BOB SMITH
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If the Porter Sesnon property next to New Brighton Beach state park in Aptos is somehow acquired by a public agency, what will happen to it?

Until now, the only suggestions for it have focused on adding it to the state park and using it as a recreational-vehicle park.

Members of the New Brighton Beach Action Coalition this morn-

ing proposed turning the property — which features large meadows, tree-lined seasonal creeks, high bluffs and sandy beaches — into an "Environmental Discovery Center."

The New Brighton Beach Action Coalition is a group of community organizations and individuals formed after the defeat 19 months ago of the referendum on the Wingspread development plan proposed by Hare, Brewer and

Kelley, who have a 99-year lease on the property, which is owned by the University of California.

Coalition spokesman Pat Manning said the group still feels that the property's lease can be purchased from Hare, Brewer and Kelley, despite the fact that HBK principal Ryland Kelley notified the state last summer that the property was no longer for sale.

The group, she added, would like to see the property acquired

under a joint-powers arrangement that includes the state, the county and the city of Capitola.

"Believing that the Porter Sesnon land is such a 'unique' place, we wanted to develop a use for it that would preserve its uniqueness," Manning said this morning. "A plan where the public would be assured 'access' to the property, where the members of our community would, indeed, receive 'public benefit,' and where the

beauty of the land and its environment would remain protected."

An environmental discovery center, sometimes called environmental learning centers or interpretative centers, Manning said, are for people "to discover first hand the natural environment around them."

"There are many special natural areas in the state that have been preserved because they provide examples of a particular envi-

ronment that is unique to that area," added Manning.

The property, the group contends, contains four distinct biological habitats — coastal meadow, riparian woodland, bluff woodland and beach — in 66 acres.

A limited amount of development would be needed to create a viable discovery center, the coalition said, noting that all buildings

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and paved parking areas can be built in the eight-acre meadow closest to the freeway.

The coalition sees Porter Sesnon used by county school children on a day-use basis, with expansion to include an overnight stay at New Brighton or Seacliff state beaches.

It could also be coupled with trips to the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park for a comparison of two widely differing environments and to the Santa Cruz City Museum for an extended look at the coastal environment, the coalition said.

It would also be open to county residents when not being used by students.

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