

✓ For sale' sign goes up at Grey Whale Ranch

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SANTA CRUZ — Will it become a state park, a logging area or a site for private homes? The fate of the Grey Whale Ranch is once again up in the air, now that the current owner has listed the property for sale.

The 2,300-acre ranch located in the hills between UC Santa Cruz and Wilder Ranch State Park was listed for sale Tuesday for \$11 million, according to Realtor Leroy Rockelman of Thunderbird Realty. Rockelman, who listed the property, is optimistic that a buyer will be easy to find.

"I feel we'll be able to find a buyer who will do something compatible with what the people of Santa Cruz want," he said. "There are all kinds of buyers out there, you never know what you're going to come across."

With the listing of the Grey Whale Ranch,

a huge chunk of Santa Cruz' north coast is now up for sale. The Coast Dairies and Land Co. is offering more than 7,000 acres of oceanside land for \$15 million, and two other ranches of 372 and 206 acres each are on the market.

Rockelman figures that a buyer could build "40 or so" five-acre homesites on the Grey Whale Ranch, and still leave the vast majority of the land in open space. It also might be possible to sell the ranch to a wealthy person who would like to raise horses on the property, he said.

"There are all kinds of possibilities that could be worked out," he said.

The owners, Ron and Linda Yanke, reportedly purchased the ranch last spring for \$5 million. The couple, who own Sequoia Forest Industries, hoped to cut timber on the land to supply their sawmill in Dinuba.

Please see RANCH — A12

Ranch/ North coast property up for grabs

Continued from Page A1

But local opposition to the logging plan resulted in one logging plan being denied by the state Board of Forestry last year and a new plan now meeting stiff opposition from county government as well as from logging opponents. The California Department of Forestry will decide on the latest plan next month, but the county has already resolved to appeal an approval.

A task force organized by Assemblyman Sam Farr and State Sen. Henry Mello also is trying to find funding to purchase the land as a state park.

With that backdrop, the Yanks are going to press ahead with their latest timber harvest permit while the land is on the market, but "I don't know if they're too optimistic (about the logging plans) at this point," Rockelman said.

The ranch is divided into 15 parcels, and is zoned for agricul-

ture and timber production. Such zoning would theoretically allow a small number of homesites without further land divisions, he said.

The property's timber rights also will be included in the selling price, "whatever that's worth," he said.

Rockelman hopes to sell the land to someone who doesn't want to cut timber, and is willing to settle on a development scheme the community approves of.

"I'd like to see it stay the way it is," he said. "I've been out there

and it's like another world, it's so beautiful. If I won the lottery, I'd buy it myself."

Rockelman said he was a little apprehensive when he listed the property, knowing the amount of controversy plans for the land have generated.

"I don't want to be run out of town on a rail, I want to be a good guy," he said. "I'll try to find a buyer that will make people happy."