

Gray Whale Ranch Logging plan approval temporarily rescinded

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SANTA CRUZ — State officials have rescinded approval of a controversial logging proposal at Gray Whale Ranch because of a "procedural error," but expect to renew the decision next month.

As a result, an Oct. 6 appeal hearing for the 124-acre logging plan has been canceled and the public comment period has been reopened until Oct. 5.

The state Department of Forestry will likely approve the plan again on Oct. 5, said Dave Soho, resource manager for the CDF office in Felton.

The county Board of Supervisors, which filed the appeal, will have to do so again within 10 days of the decision by CDF.

The plan to log the Peasley Gulch area of the scenic ranch west of Empire Grade Road was rescinded last week after attorneys for CDF found that the Felton office incorrectly processed the plan. A written response to issues raised at the public hearing was not made available to the public as required under state rules, Soho said.

"You have to realize we're doing multiple reviews at a time. Sometimes these things happen," he said.

Environmentalists say the error and subsequent delay is not significant in their battle to stop the project. But they say they are pleased they have received copies of the written response.