

# Plans in place for UFW march

By SCOTT DAVID BRENNAN  
STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — City officials and United Farm Workers organizers are putting the finishing touches on their plans to accommodate a 20,000-person march and rally in Watsonville this Sunday.

"We may even have more than (20,000 people)," said Watsonville police Chief Terry Medina in an interview this morning.

Authorities have "two awesome responsibilities," Medina said. Police must assure the marchers their right to express their freedom of speech and assembly and simultaneously ensure the protection of the community, he said.

Law enforcement will be in full force this weekend. "We're doing everything we can to make it a safe event," said Watsonville police Lt. Jim Brown.

But he warns city residents to expect major traffic delays in town during the march, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. "Be prepared for traffic gridlock, plan ahead," Brown said.

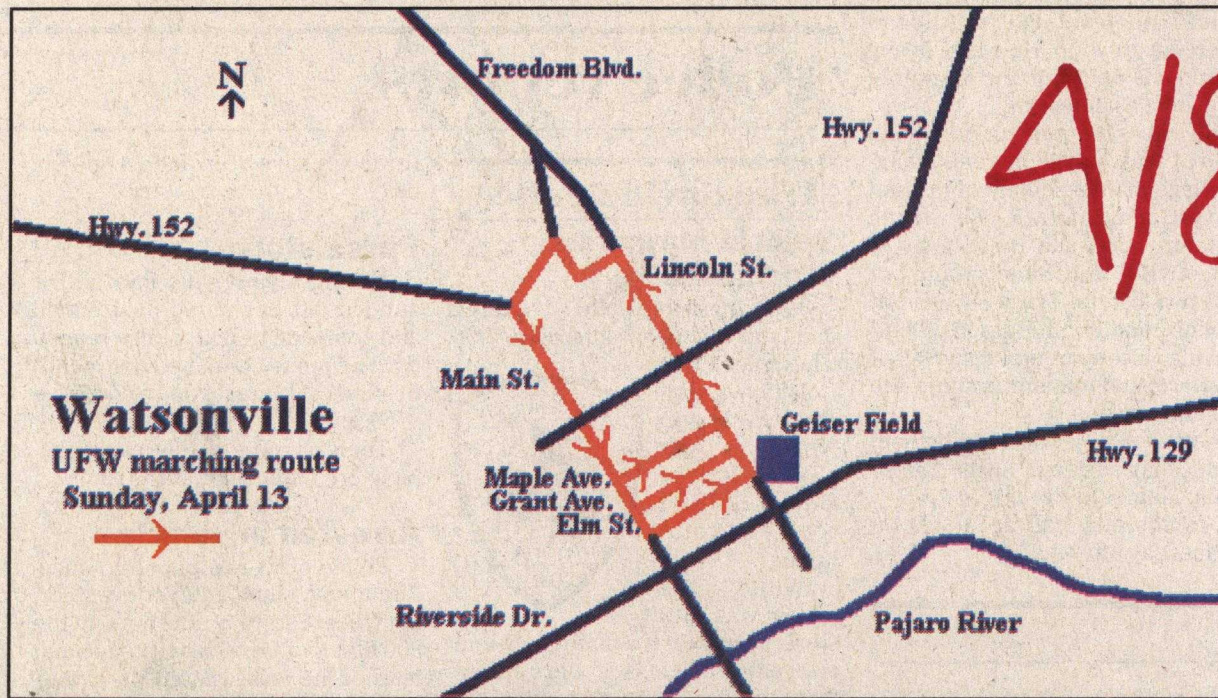
More than 100 officers will be in town this Sunday for the march sponsored by the AFL-CIO, and 50 other officers will be on standby in case of an emergency.

Watsonville police will have 38 officers on duty. The Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department will have 32 deputies here and the Capitola, Scotts Valley and Santa Cruz City police departments each will have two officers in town.

The California Highway Patrol will provide 24 officers and have a helicopter and two airplanes in the air throughout the day.

"We're going to keep an eye on the crowds and give assistance to Watsonville PD," said Sgt. Bob Joyner, with CHP Coastal Division Air Operations. He said pilots will be in constant contact with ground officers, especially to assist in traffic coordination.

Officials with the union, which is trying to organize the area's strawberry pickers, are also expected to



Graphic by Scott David Brennan

The march is tentatively set to begin at Geiser Field at Watsonville High School, heading north on Lincoln Street to Palm Avenue, west on Palm to Brennan Street, north on Brennan to Freedom Boulevard, south on Freedom to Main Street, then south on Main to the downtown. On south Main, marchers will split three ways, with groups heading east on Maple Avenue, Grant Avenue and Elm Street. They'll converge again at the high school field for a rally.



Tarmo Hannula

**Adan Ramirez, a security guard for the United Farm Workers, watches the crowd during a recent union event.**

## Radio host may be only conspicuous opponent

By SCOTT DAVID BRENNAN  
STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — Organized opposition will lay low for this weekend's United Farm Workers march. However, a local talk radio show host is planning a demonstration against the union.

1080 KSCO's Rob Roberts, who describes himself as bold, black and conservative, said in an interview that he plans to stand at the corner of East Beach and Lincoln streets during the March with a sign saying "AFL-CIO/UFW, liar, liar pants on fire," and waving an American flag.

Sergio Soto, who organized the 5,000-person anti-union march in

Watsonville last summer, said his group — Watsonville-based Ag Workers of America — has no plans for this weekend.

"This is David versus Goliath and we're David," Soto said. "We don't want to get hurt." Soto said his group is non-violent and doesn't want a confrontation.

Roberts, who hosts the Sunday afternoon radio show "Out Takes," said the UFW's tactics in organizing strawberry workers is "subterfuge at best," and he called the 20,000 person march an "invasion."

While he said he will not provoke a confrontation, Roberts also said

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## What they'll do while they're here

WATSONVILLE — While several United Farm Workers march organizers are already in town and others are arriving daily, the marchers themselves, expected to number 20,000, aren't scheduled to arrive in town until early Sunday morning, organizers say.

When they arrive, a network of parking lots and shuttle buses will steer them toward Geiser Field for a day of planned events, organizers say. Afterward, they plan to leave Watsonville by dusk.

Here's the scenario, according to city and union officials:

■ Dawn: 200 to 300 buses, and up to 3,000 cars will start to funnel into town from all major highways. They will park at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, on Second Street in downtown, at the new Watsonville Community Hospital on Airport Boulevard and at the Watsonville Municipal Airport.

Shuttle buses will pick up arrivals at the parking lots and drop them off at the corner of Martinelli Street and East Lake Avenue or at the corner of Kerney and Walker streets. From the drop-off points, marchers will walk to Geiser Field at Watsonville High School.

■ 8:30 a.m.: As people continue to arrive, an interfaith religious service, including a Catholic Mass, is planned at Geiser Field, followed by musical guests and various speakers. The musical group La Mafia is scheduled to perform, organiz-

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provide about 400 "marshals" to guide the marchers along their route. The marshals are to be briefed by police before operations begin, Medina said.

The Watsonville Fire Department will have a fire engine and crew on standby near the East Lake Village shopping center, on the east side of town, to ensure adequate fire protection around town while city streets are affected, fire officials said.

Airport officials plan to issue a "notice to airmen" Wednesday instructing pilots to avoid flying over downtown Watsonville this Sunday, said Airport Manager Don French. He said he expects a flurry of helicopter activity over the downtown from the news media and CHP.

Several parking lots have been reserved around town to accommodate up to 300 buses and 3,000 cars. While the marchers are not expected to spend the night, motel reservations are already booked up just to accommodate the UFW staffers, organizers said.

Despite these arrangements, UFW spokeswoman Jocelyn Sherman said it's an assumption to say most of the marchers will be coming from out of town. "The UFW is here in Watsonville and has been here in Watsonville," she said.

Declining to say how many locals or visitors would be here Sunday, she said simply, "This march is going to be huge — unprecedented."

Of the 222 motels rooms in town, there were only 13 vacancies as of Monday afternoon, for Saturday night. A large block of rooms was rented at the Best Western by the UFW for this entire week, in order to accommodate staff arriving daily, organizers said.

The Pajaro Valley Unified School District reached an agreement this month allowing the union to use Watsonville High School's Geiser Field stadium. The union will bear the costs of PVUSD staff on site and clean-up crews, school officials said.

The UFW's 1.8-mile march is planned to begin at 11 a.m. on Sunday at Geiser Field. The march will head north on Lincoln Street to Palm Avenue, west on Palm to Brennan Street, north on Brennan to Freedom Boulevard, south on Freedom to Main Street, south on Main

to the downtown. On south Main the marchers will split three ways, with part of the group heading east on Maple Avenue, part on Grant Avenue and part on Elm Street. The marchers will then converge again upon the high school field for a rally until 3 p.m.

And while the route will surround a large block of residences and businesses, police say they will create a break in the march if local residents need to pass through.

Medina, the city's chief negotiator for the union marching permit, said that he and AFL-CIO/UFW organizers finalized the permit and special requirements Monday night for the march. However, he said he is considering a union request to revise the march route.

As part of the agreement, the UFW will be required to pay a portion of the estimated \$70,000 in costs of law enforcement and additional city services for the Sunday event, said Interim City Manager Carlos Palacios.

The UFW's share will be \$20,465, said Medina. The remainder of the costs could not legally be charged to the union, because they involve general protection of the city.

The city has required that the union provide \$10 million in insurance for the event.

The union also must have one portable bathroom for every 150 people, which works out to at least 133. The bathrooms will be located at various parking lots around the city and at the stadium.

The union organizers say they're

marching for the basic rights for strawberry workers, including job security, bathrooms and fresh water in the fields.

Many farmers are already meeting the union's demands, but they weren't prior to the beginning of the UFW organizing effort last year, organizers claim. Spokeswoman Sherman also said that pay raises given by local growers last year were used as an incentive for workers not to support the union.

While a number of national leaders and celebrities from out of town will speak at the Sunday afternoon Geiser Field rally, city leaders say they weren't invited to attend or welcome the crowd to Watsonville.

"To my knowledge no one (in city government) is participating," said Watsonville Mayor Al Alcalá, adding that he may ride around town in a police car to observe the activities. "We haven't been invited to anything," he said.

When U.S. Rep. Joe Kennedy, D-Mass, came to town last week for a UFW appearance, Alcalá said he wasn't notified until just a few hours beforehand.

Palacios said he will be working Sunday, but was not invited to the march or rally.

For city restaurants and shops, the event could be a boon. "This is an opportunity to do some brisk business," said Jerry Hernandez, executive director of Main Street Watsonville.

"Some people see assemblies as bothersome because they will bring in large numbers of people," but hopefully the visitors will want to eat and do some shopping here, Hernandez said.

## SCHEDULE

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ers say.

■ 10:30 a.m.: Watsonville Police Department and Public Works Department officials will begin closing several streets in the downtown area in preparation for the march.

■ 11 a.m.: The march will begin at Geiser Field and head north on Lincoln Street. The Rev. Jesse Jackson, UFW President Arturo Rodriguez, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, Executive Vice-President Linda Chavez-Thompson and a host of Hollywood celebrities, in-

cluding Martin Sheen, will lead the expected 20,000 marchers in a circular path around town.

■ 1 p.m.: A rally is scheduled to begin after marchers return to the stadium. Dignitaries and celebrities will be joined on stage with average strawberry field workers who will talk about working conditions and their desire for union representation, organizers say.

■ 3 p.m.: The rally is scheduled to end and marchers will begin walking to shuttle pick-up spots, where buses will return them to the various parking lots for departure. Marchers are not expected to stay overnight.

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that he would not back down from one.

The UFW's campaign is based on lies and disinformation, he said. "They have sought to portray through the media that the strawberry workers are being exploited, akin to slavery," Roberts said. "That is totally inappropriate."

Roberts, who said he will be phoning in updates on the march to the radio station, said he expects a group of listeners and supporters to join him at his demonstration. "People should not fear (the march)," he said.

Saturday morning talk show host Michael Olsen will feature a preview of the march and overview of the UFW's organizing efforts on his show, Saturday Morning Agriculture, from 9 to 10 a.m. on AM 1080 KSCO.