

7/9/99

Gray Whale logging plan sparks debate

By **JOHN BESSA**
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Logging on the Gray Whale Ranch should be delayed until the effects of two prior harvests can be studied, opponents of the latest logging proposal for the site argued Thursday.

Supporters of the proposal said opposition was rooted in land use issues and not the plan.

About two dozen people attended a state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection hearing on the proposal to cut half the trees in a 165-acre plot straddling Empire Grade Road.

Located above Majors Creek, the harvest, if approved, would be the third logging operation on the 2,300-acre ranch since Idaho businessman Ron Yanke bought the land in 1988. Four other attempts to log portions of the ranch failed amid outspoken opposition.

Ed Davidson of Santa Cruz said the opposition was driven by opponents' land use concerns.

"The issue is not timber harvesting, it is one of trying to prevent the property owner from proper use of his land. This is part of a larger agenda," he said.

Opponents of the plan said logging would foster erosion that would harm native fish runs and Santa Cruz City water supplies. The city draws some

of its water from Majors Creek, 1.5 miles below the proposed harvest.

Dennis Davie, a local Earth First! contact person, said sediment would harm steelhead habitat in the creek. A county official told Davie that fewer than 50 of the fish were counted in the stream last winter, he said.

Davie warned that erosion problems from two recent harvests may surface with winter rains, and asked CDF reject any logging plan that would impact streams the steelhead use.

Forester Steve Ziegler, a consultant on the project and previous harvests on the property, said logging would start either this fall or next spring with CDF approval.

Old and young trees will be cut, he said. About 80 percent of the trees are redwood, and 20 percent are Douglas fir, he said.

A road to be cut for the harvest operation will be removed when the logging is done and an existing road will be repaired to reduce soil erosion, Ziegler said.

The CDF will accept written comments on the proposal until Sept. 26, Drinkard said. After that, Tom Osipowich of the CDF office in Santa Rosa will decide on the plan.

Comments can be sent to Osipowich at the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, P.O. box 670, Santa Rosa, Calif. 95402-0670.