

Wilson proposes E. Cliff Drive funds

Erosion
By ERIN K. QUIRK
Sentinel staff writer

PLEASURE POINT — Erosion on East Cliff Drive has captured Gov. Pete Wilson's attention and will be part of the \$13 million Coastal Initiative in his 1997-1998 budget next week.

The proposal, which is up for legislative approval next week, seeks to improve beach access, acquire more wetlands and streamline coastal planning and zoning. For Santa Cruz, if the initiative is approved, it will mean \$960,000 in funding for the next phase of erosion control along East Cliff Drive. Wilson administration officials are calling the package an update of the California Coastal Act of 1976 — a "less-fragmented, more comprehensive, ecosystem approach."

The \$960,000 project would concentrate on a stretch of East Cliff from 33rd Avenue to 36th Avenue, according to officials from the Department of Boating and Waterways, which will administer the funds. Department director Ron Del Principe said if the budget is approved and state funding secured, construction on the three-block stretch of East Cliff Drive could begin as early as this fall.

The new project is not part of the current erosion work at Larch Lane and East Cliff Drive; that project

Please see E. CLIFF — BACK PAGE

E. Cliff Drive funds

Continued from Page A1

is federally funded. The 33rd-to-36th Avenue project is part of the county's larger plan to stop the erosion along East Cliff and eventually build a promenade similar to that on West Cliff Drive. The funding for the promenade has already been secured but cannot be used until the cliff is stable.

County Redevelopment Agency officials, who have worked on the East Cliff erosion projects, greeted Wilson's attention to the cliffs with enthusiasm.

"The community out there has been working on this for a long time," said project coordinator Chris Hirsch. "To see something like this come to fruition is just great."

Wilson's proposal also includes:

- \$6.25 million for coastal wetland restoration and protection.

- \$3.4 million in beach enhancement funds, including the East Cliff Project.

- \$2.1 million for property acquisition, coast trails and creation of local coastal plans.

- \$650,000 for coastal water quality projects.

- \$500,000 for improvements in information technology related to the coast.

Environmental groups across the state have criticized Wilson's package, calling it a public relations maneuver to bolster the governor's flagging environmental record. Assemblyman Fred Keeley, D-Boulder Creek, said whatever the initiative is, he is pleased with the governor's attention to the coast.

"None of these are bold new ideas, but part of ongoing appropriations for coastal-related activities," Keeley said. "Whether it is a large list of small ideas or something substantive ... it's too early to say."