

Funds secured for Porter-Senson

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APTOS — The state Legislature gave final approval this week to a bill to purchase the 72-acre Porter-Senson property.

The legislation, Senate Bill 200, authored by state Sen. Henry Mello, D-Watsonville, now goes to Gov. Pete Wilson for approval. He is expected to sign it.

"I'm extremely pleased that the governor has expressed his strong support for this once-in-a-lifetime acquisition for the state park system," Mello said in a prepared statement. "He has clearly indicated that he'll sign the bill as soon as it reaches him."

Last month, Mello was able to secure \$2 million in the state budget to buy the land. The bill secures another \$1.45 million from other sources such as bond funds for state parks for the total \$3.45 million needed to buy the property.

Located between New Brighton State Beach and Seacliff State Beach, the pristine bluffs have been the subject of fierce political battles between developers and preservationists.

During the 1980s, people who wanted the land to remain undeveloped fought Ryland Kelley's plans to build the Wingspread conference center on the site.

Kelley obtained a 99-year lease of

the land from the University of California in 1978 for \$1.75 million. He tried for eight years to get county approval to build a hotel, conference center and performing arts complex on the property.

County supervisors ultimately approved Kelley's project on a 3-2 vote, but the board made its approval conditional on the outcome of a voter referendum. In 1988, voters rejected Kelley's ambitious plans by a margin of nearly 2-1.

First Nationwide Bank of San Francisco foreclosed on the property last year and gained rights to the lease.

Under the plan, the state will gain full control of the property.