

Santa Cruz Salamander *Endangered* Gets Boosts *12-16-71 Species*

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Santa Cruz County's unique long-toed salamander got a boost from two sources Wednesday, part of efforts to save the salamander's last known breeding grounds from extinction.

Nature Conservancy, a private non-profit conservationist organization, notified a county committee by telephone it will meet Monday with property owners to talk about purchasing breeding grounds near La Selva Beach.

The property was being considered for a mobile home park, but zoning for the mobile homes was rejected by county supervisors two weeks ago.

Nature Conservancy did not show up for a meeting on the issue last week. State and federal agencies said they move too slowly to take immediate action, so it is up to the private group.

At the same time, a state property auction of land next to the salamander's other known breeding grounds at Highway 1 and Rob Roy Junction was called off.

At the request of Walter Monasch, county planning director, the state Public Works Department canceled the sale of a half-acre parcel next to the interchange. Not only is the salamander involved, but the state sale might have led to an unwanted service station or other commercial use next to the Freedom Boulevard off-ramp, Monasch said.

However, a move to have the Highway 1 salamander breeding area rezoned from commercial to a "flood plain" zone was held in abeyance Wednesday night by the county planning commission. County Youth Commissioners Jeff Moore and Stephen Matthews asked for the rezoning so the breeding pond can be re-flooded.

Their request was held up after Monasch told the commission his staff is studying zoning changes for all commercial property in the Highway 1 freeway area, and will bring back recommendations to the commission in January.