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Big development vs. small plants

Scotts Valley housing plan raises concern over flowers

By Terri Morgan
Special to the Mercury News

The public will have an opportunity tonight to comment on whether 10 species of locally rare plants can survive in the heart of the largest housing development ever proposed for the city of Scotts Valley.

The Scotts Valley City Council will listen to public comment on a report proposing ways to help care for the Scotts Valley spineflower and nine other plants that lie in the path of the proposed 282-acre Glenwood Estates Golf and Country Club development.

The project, near Bethany College in north Scotts Valley, would include 276 homes, an 18-hole golf course, hiking, biking and horseback riding trails, and a nature reserve.

The plans call for a mix of single-family residences, ranging from 3,000 to 4,000 square

feet, and two- and three-bedroom townhouses. The majority of the residences would be luxury homes priced from \$400,000 to \$700,000.

The council initially approved the Glenwood Estates project in 1989. That was successfully appealed by environmentalists, who argued the project jeopardized the fate of several plant species, including some found only in Scotts Valley. A supplemental environmental impact report was ordered by state officials to address those concerns.

"This is a major project, located in one of the major sensitive habitat areas in Santa Cruz County," said Stephen McCabe of the California Native Plant Society. "The site supports some of the most important flower fields remaining in the county."

McCabe said his organization has petitioned the secretary of the interior for an emergency endangered species listing for the Scotts Valley spineflower. Another flower, the mousefoot polygonum, discovered in 1990, is found on the site. It also would be affected by the development, along with at least eight other "sensitive"

plant species, McCabe said.

All public concerns will be addressed in a final report, which will be subject to approval by the city planning commission and the city council.

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED

The public hearing is scheduled to begin at 7:30 tonight in the council chambers, 1 Civic Center Drive, Scotts Valley. Written comment on the document will be accepted by the planning department until Sept. 3.

Inside

Upheaval may thwart student program

Students' Soviet Union plans are put on hold.

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