

Salamanders Saved Again

Endangered Species

By BOB LIGON
Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — County Supervisor Dan Forbus stepped forward Wednesday to break a deadlock that could have ended 20,000 years of existence of the famed Santa Cruz long-toed salamander.

Forbus agreed to sign a hold-harmless agreement that will enable scientists to refill the salamanders' breeding pond, which is almost dry.

A few days of hot weather could have baked the salamander larvae in the pond, killing off a new generation of the almost-extinct salamander.

Supervisors Tuesday refused to second a motion by Supervisor Ralph Sanson to renew a hold-harmless agreement for the pond property.

Without such an agreement, the property owners refuse to allow scientists on the property.

Chairman Philip Harry Tuesday indicated he favored extending the agreement, but could not, as chairman, second Sanson's motion.

Forbus Wednesday said he will support the motion, thus insuring its approval.

However, Alan Holbert, Cabrillo College biologist appointed by supervisors to coordinate the Save-the-Salamander campaign, says the salamander isn't out of the woods yet.

"We need the temporary use of a pump to refill the

pond from a nearby well," said Holbert.

He says without water in the pond "they, (the larvae) could be dead by next Tuesday."

This poses another problem in that supervisors won't meet again until next Tuesday to ratify the hold-harmless agreement.

Holbert, after the supervisors inaction Tuesday, said he contacted the property owners and got the assurance they would allow access to the property of any "responsible agency" who would sign a hold harmless agreement.

Holbert said the University of California indicated it would sign such an agreement. He also said Cabrillo College would, too.

"But our major problem is now that we need a pump," said Holbert.

Forbus Wednesday said he has nothing against the salamanders, just the state and federal bureaucrats who months ago indicated they would help solve the salamanders' plight but haven't followed through on their promises.

Sanson said he checked with state officials Wednesday and was assured that state funds will be made available to buy the property, thus saving the salamanders' breeding place.

The long-toed salamander is believed to be found no other place on earth but here.

Staff Price OK?