



BEACH—Roy Stearns of Salinas, stands on riprap seawall erected

on a beach near Davenport. County Supervisors Tuesday ordered an investigation

to determine if the riprap was put on state land.

★ ★ ★

★ ★ ★

Supervisor Threatens Suit Over Beach Access Issue

By **BOB LIGON**
Mercury Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — County Supervisor Ralph Sanson Tuesday threatened to file suit as a private citizen to force Santa Cruz County government to take steps to insure public access to beaches.

What drew his ire was what he termed "reluctance" by the county to act in the public interest concerning a beach in the Davenport area.

A landowner there created a building lot by building a seawall on the beach, changed the course of the stream there because of the seawall, and pushed sand from the beach onto the building lot.

Sanson indicated, however, that his main concern is that the lot may be on public beach land.

He referred to a recent State Supreme Court ruling concerning private beaches. The ruling says that the public cannot be stopped from

using private beaches that have long been in public use.

"I'm seriously considering legal action myself if the county won't act," said Sanson.

Supervisor Henry Mello agreed with Sanson, saying, "If this is our best effort to save the beaches, we have already lost the fight."

The beach issue was brought to the attention of the board several weeks ago by James Franks, a private citizen who demanded an investigation.

The board referred the matter to the County Counsel's office which Tuesday reported that a "red tag" order has been posted on the property stopping any work there. However, the owner hasn't been contacted yet, the report said.

Sanson described the report as "wishy washy" in light of the alleged violations involved.

Franks claimed that the violations are "clear cut" and that the county should have taken action immediately.

Franks also wanted to know why the State Lands Commission wasn't contacted and told that the lot may be on state-owned tideland area. Franks, after the meeting, said he had contacted the commission and that it is looking into the matter.

"What concerns me most," said Franks, "is that you have to force these people (county officials) to act in the public interest on matters like this."

The lot in question is near a beach where an earth barrier has been installed and signs erected saying that the public's right to pass is subject to permission of the owner.

The beach property is owned by Pacific Cement & Aggregate Co. of Davenport.

The matter concerning the earth barrier and signs was brought to the attention of the board by Dennis Van Tassel, a private citizen of Santa Cruz. Van Tassel also has filed a formal complaint with City of Santa Cruz over the Cascade Mobile Home Park which adjoins Natural Bridges State Beach.

Van Tassel contends that the mobile home park blocks public access to the beach. He claims that the development there has eliminated many trails to the beach that has been used for years by the public.

Van Tassel contends that in light of the recent Supreme Court ruling, the county should take legal action against existing violations and also to prevent future beaches and access trails from being blocked.

Mello said he is concerned that the signs erected at the beach could eventually affect the county's legal status.

The board Tuesday ordered a more detailed report on the beach issue for its meeting on Oct. 27.