

Erosion Workers shore up Santa Cruz coastline

Top story: Officials hope the 40 million pounds of stone will prevent more erosion along West Cliff Drive.

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In the continuing effort to keep the relentless power of the Pacific Ocean from chewing up more of the coastline along West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz, workers are placing 40 million pounds of stone at the foot of the rugged sea cliff.

Added to twice that much riprap dumped at the bottom of the cliff last year to stem erosion, the project will see 60,000 tons of granite and basalt boulders in place when it wraps up in October.

Hauled to the site from a quarry in Val-

lejo, the massive blocks of stone are being placed at the bottom of the bluffs by a giant crane. City public works officials hope the riprap will stop the sea from eating away the popular bike path and roadway along West Cliff Drive.

This week, Granite Construction Co. workers hope to finish the first phase of this year's project. This phase, begun Aug. 3, has caused the closing of West Cliff between Almar and Woodrow avenues, with traffic detoured onto Oxford Way for the duration.

Road closings and detours will occur at

three other sites, according to Tom Sharp of the public works department. Work at the end of Columbia Street, which should get under way next week, will force a detour off West Cliff Drive for four weeks, he predicted. The third phase, at the end of Woodrow, will force a three-week detour, and the final phase, at the end of De La Costa Avenue, will mean another three-week detour.

Three-quarters of the cost of the shoreline protection work is being paid for with \$3.25 million from the California Boating and Waterway fund, with the city picking up the rest, according to Sharp. Two-thirds of the project was done last summer.

"We think this is designed to really work" to stop erosion that, over the years, has washed away many yards of bluffs at

some points along West Cliff, said Sharp. "We're working now where the erosion is closest to the roadway."

Residents along the closed stretch of West Cliff Drive appreciate that the work is designed, ultimately, to protect their homes as well as the street in front of them.

"The trucks create a lot of dirt and dust," said Thomas Decker as he watched heavy equipment working at the edge of the bluff across the street from the house where he has lived for nine years. "I approve of the work. It has to be done."

Sandy Ladd, a former Santa Cruz resident who moved to Burlingame several years ago, was strolling along the closed

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stretch of roadway, watching boogie-boarders scoot through the surf and strings of pelicans soar above the waves.

"I missed Santa Cruz so badly," she said, "that I came down to take my walk. I walked along here for 20 years before I moved.

"What I think is that they ought to close this road completely. This whole area ought to be a park."

Noise from the work is annoying to those playing in the surf, said Curtis Craver, 16, who said he comes every day to the popular boogie-boarding beach at the

end of David Way.

"Yeah," said the wetsuit-clad Santa Cruz youth, "you can hear the heavy equipment, and when they drop those boulders out of the trucks, it's really loud, like thunder."

Watching the surf and waiting for their turns to unload their rigs were truckers Bob Kligingenfuss of San Leandro and Gary Westober of San Jose. Each said it was his first trip over the hill from Vallejo with a load of boulders — as well as his last.

"I'll never haul this stuff again," said Kligingenfuss, who complained he didn't like the way the 20 tons of boulders made his truck feel while he drove.

"Me neither," said Westober, who said the boulders in the back of his truck averaged about seven tons apiece.

"This stuff tears up your equipment," he said. "It punches holes in the truck when they load it in and does more damage when they take it out."