

Cement ship may be saved

Concrete company expresses interest in helping with repairs

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SEACLIFF STATE BEACH — Cement ship-lovers and state park rangers this week may be a step closer to any hope of seeing the historic monument fixed and reopened.

The gates to the landmark, which has marked Seacliff and Rio del Mar beach territory since 1930, was closed earlier this year to visitors at the on-set of El Niño storms. The pier alone has remained open in calm weather.

With the ship left in a state of unknown damage, California State Parks rangers were planning to have an engineer assess the damages. And park rangers weren't optimistic it would ever open again.

But Bob Culbertson, chief ranger of the Santa Cruz State Parks, said the ship could have been saved by the bell.

"I know we got a call last week from Las Animas Concrete and they said they and another granite company were interested in donating some funds to help with structural engineering to help repair the ship and reopen it," he said. "We referred the call to the district chief to see if that will happen."

Jodi Apelt, of the Seacliff State Beach Visitor's Center, said she heard Wednesday the fate of the ship is no longer in the dark and the reopening is a matter of time.

Culbertson said he wasn't sure the contact was carried through.

"I don't know yet if it will come through," he said. The response came quickly upon a community awakened with the possibility the ship may be left to deteriorate to nature if the structural damage is deep enough.

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nity," he said.

If Las Animas can help, they may bring in their own structural engineers, he said. California State Parks officials earlier this month said they were looking to get an engineer to assess the damages that might not be obvious.

But as of last week, plans to have the analysis done were yet undetermined.

"Las Animas can help determine what can make it safe and that's our concern," Culbertson said.

But a summer or even a 1998 opening still might not be on the horizon, depending on the work to be done.

"We still would have the whole repair process," he said. "We need the inspection by a competent engineer and we need to have the funds available to do it."

The ship was said to be in danger of deeper waters if the review goes beyond the scope of what the state is willing to pay for.

A minor repair might be anywhere from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Beyond that, the costs could reach well into double figures.

Culbertson said he did not know how much the company was willing to offer.