Greenbelt

SJMN 9-14-94

Santa Cruz agrees to buy Arana Gulch for park

BY PAUL ROGERS
Mercury News Staff Writer

Arana Gulch, a scenic property overlooking the Santa Cruz yacht harbor that once was slated for a housing subdivision and car dealerships, becomes a public park this week.

The Santa Cruz City Council approved an agreement Tuesday to buy the 55-acre parcel for $3.5 million from the Santa Cruz Auto Plaza, a partnership of three local businessmen, ending a 15-year battle over the most prominent privately owned greenbelt area left within the city limits.

"Nobody really thought it was possible," Councilman Mike Rotkin said. "This will have an impact for generations to come."

The land, which features meadows, creeks and views of the ocean, will be opened to the public Friday, said Rudy Quintanar, city parks superintendent.

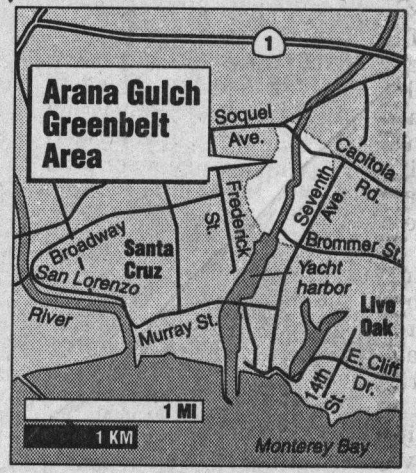
For now, only hiking will be allowed. No dogs or bikes will be permitted, he said.

The council also approved spending $12,000 to repair fences on the land, install signs and fund patrols by park rangers.

Arana Gulch becomes the fourth-largest of Santa Cruz's 26 city parks. It is the first major parkland purchase since 1989, when Santa Cruz bought the 614-acre Pogonip property with $15 million from a state bond act.

Eventually, Arana Gulch may feature a soccer field, playground equipment, parking and restrooms. Those were the recommendations of a 17-member city greenbelt commission in a report to the council earlier this year.

See GULCH, Page 2B



CARL NEIBURGER — MERCURY NEWS

SJMN 9-14-94

Santa Cruz buying Arana Gulch from auto plaza group for park

■ GULCH

from Page 1B

Such improvements probably are two years off, Quintanar said.

The deal stretched Santa Cruz's already thin finances.

The council decided to spend all of the city's $2.12 million capital improvement fund, money normally used for bridges and roads. Also spent will be $225,000 in parks facility funding and $1.2 million taken from the general fund and worker's compensation fund.

The $1.2 million will be repaid from $1.3 million the city expects to reap from the sale of undeveloped lots on Swanton Street.

Most of the rest of the money also will be repaid. The council expects to raise about $2 million by allowing developers to build 10 to 20 houses on an area of about three acres of the Arana Gulch property near its border with Mentel Avenue.