

Bonny Doon

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Off-road vehicle funds will boost Bonny Doon preserve

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SANTA CRUZ — Restoration of a state ecological reserve in Bonny Doon will get a boost Tuesday with the Board of Supervisors' decision to contribute money from the county's off-road vehicle fund.

The county has amassed more than \$50,000 from the state Parks Department's Off Highway Vehicle Fund. Until recently, state law

mandated the money be spent on development or maintenance of off-road vehicle areas. If a county or city didn't have such an area, it could give its money to a neighboring local government that did.

In 1992, a state law allowed a county to spend its money to restore areas damaged by illegal riding of dirt bikes, jeeps or other off-road vehicles.

Supervisors decided Tuesday to give the state Department of Fish

and Game use of its off-road fund money to restore the Bonny Doon Ecological Reserve.

County Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services officials will pursue an agreement with state Fish and Game.

Off-road vehicle users have said they want the money to go toward building a park where dirt-bikers and four-wheel drive users can drive legally. None spoke at Tuesday's meeting.

Santa Cruz County has 6,712 registered off-road vehicles.

The state parks system has already contributed \$20,000 directly to the ecological reserve, said Larry Helm of the Off-Highway Division of the state parks system.

That money came directly from the state park's \$30 million-a-year off-road vehicle fund, Helm said. State law requires the Off-Highway Division to spend a third of its income on conservation and enforce-

ment, Helm said.

The county's money comes from a separate fund, Helm said, that is doled out depending on a county's population.

The state bought the reserve's 515 acres five years ago for about \$1.7 million, said Jeannine DeWald, state associate wildlife biologist.

The portion of the reserve that will likely receive the bulk of the attention is what is known as the

"race track" area, DeWald said.

People have driven around the meadow in years past, tearing up plants. Some rare species in the area include the Ben Lomond spine flower, the Santa Cruz wallflower and the silver-leaf manzanita. Recent bicycle use has contributed to the damage.

The reserve area is fenced and closed to public access, but a hiking trail system is planned for the future, DeWald said.