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SCOTTS VALLEY 1990-

Lawsuit delays Glenwood development

By Terri Morgan
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Developers planning to build 276 new homes and an 18-hole golf course in Scotts Valley have been delayed at least a year, pending the outcome of a lawsuit filed by an environmentalist group.

The Santa Cruz-based Resource Defense Fund filed suit against the city of Scotts Valley last week, charging that its council approved an inadequate environmental document for the proposed Glenwood Estates and Golf Course project. That report fails to protect "rare, endangered, and sensitive native plant species" growing on the 282-acre site in northern Scotts Valley, the group contends.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has officially proposed that one of the plant species found on the site, the Scotts Valley spineflower, be listed as an endangered species. Environmentalists say the plant, which grows to 3 to 8 inches tall and produces pink flowers in the late spring, is found in just three Scotts Valley locations, including the one in the heart of the proposed Glenwood development.

The suit, which also names the developer, the BRUSA Corp., its consultant APC International, and the Glenwood Development Co., will put the \$60 million construction project on hold for at least 12 months, said Allan Butler, project manager.

The Scotts Valley City Council gave the project a green light on Oct. 30 when it adopted a supplemental environmental impact report for the project.

The council had initially approved the development in 1989. That ruling was successfully appealed by environmentalists who argued the original document failed to adequately protect the spineflower and nine other species of rare plants. The supplemental report was then ordered to address those concerns.

The developer applied to Santa Cruz County for the necessary grading permits last month. Butler had expected to break ground on the project in the spring of 1992 and complete it the following year. The

delay will increase the cost of the development, he said.

"The impact of the suit will push up the cost of building homes," Butler said. "That's the sad thing. Filing a lawsuit is a very anti-social move."

"We think we've done everything we can do with regard to the environment," Butler added. "The areas we've got set aside for the spineflowers, in our opinion, are adequate."

Scotts Valley Mayor Joe Miller agreed. "The city thinks this is a good, environmentally sensitive and very beneficial development that will provide a lot of recreational opportunities and housing, and I

deeply regret the fact these people felt they had to file a lawsuit."

Miller added that the spineflower is not as rare as the environmentalists claim. "We've been shown evidence in the last year that it's expanding its population," he said. "They've been coming up in people's back yards on Casa Way (a residential street near the proposed development), and it looks like it's impossible to kill."

The environmentalists filed the suit to delay the project until the spineflower is declared an endangered species, Miller charged. "They're clearly in no hurry," he said. "They want to drag this out as long as possible."