

# Gray Whale logging proposed

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By JOHN BESSA  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Longtime foes will have fodder for more debate with a proposal to harvest more trees from the Gray Whale Ranch northwest of Santa Cruz.

Owners of the 2,300-acre ranch are seeking approval to harvest redwood and fir trees on a 165-acre plot above Majors Creek on the scenic property.

A public hearing will be Thursday in Santa Cruz on the plan submitted to the local arm of the state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

"We're very concerned about the total picture there in the Majors Creek watershed," said Celia Scott, spokeswoman for Save the Gray Whale Parklands, a group seeking to preserve the land, and a City Council candidate.

"Our concern is the impacts on the watershed as a whole as well as the city's water supply," she said.

The city of Santa Cruz uses a dammed portion of the creek as one intake for city water. The proposed harvest would be 1.5

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miles above the creek.

The proposal outlines steps such as repairing roads and drainage control to minimize the impact the timber harvest will have on the environment.

Since Idaho businessman Ron Yanke bought the land in 1988, four attempts to log portions of the ranch have failed amid outspoken opposition. Two others were approved.

The latest proposal includes both sides of Empire Grade Road in the ranch's 1,100 acres of timberland.

Forester Steve Ziegler, a consultant on this and previous harvests on the property, said the parcel was last logged in 1974 as part of a larger cut.

About 80 percent of the trees are red-

wood. The other 20 percent are Douglas fir, he said.

Loggers will remove about half the trees and will cut down old and young alike, Ziegler said.

"The goal is to have an uneven-age stand in there," he said. "So we'll have some big trees left and some small trees left."

The last two logging plans were approved after attempts by conservationists and county officials to shoot them down failed.

The 124-acre Peasley Gulch harvest, south of the latest proposal has been completed, and a 177-acre cut off Smith Grade Road is nearly complete, Ziegler said.

Both plans were approved by the local branch of the state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Both were appealed to the state Board of Forestry and became the focus of failed lawsuits to block the cutting.

*The hearing is scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday at the Board of Supervisors Chamber, 701 Ocean St., Santa Cruz.*