

9/15/82 Section

City Council starts regulating the surf

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Sentinel Staff Writer

Risky competition between surfers and swimmers in the water off the San Lorenzo River mouth led to an emergency ordinance Tuesday that's meant to end the fight for ocean space.

Parks Director Jim Lang was told by the city council he can restrict times that surfers and/or swimmers can play in the waves off Santa Cruz beaches in order to make the city surf areas safer for everyone.

The emergency ordinance will allow Lang to set whatever hours he feels are necessary for safety. He is empowered to restrict surfers or swimmers at any time along city beach waters. For example,

during early morning hours, before the swimmers arrive, activity in the water could be restricted for the surfers. Later in the day, after the weather warms up and families show up at the beach, that situation could be reversed.

Lang said he would meet with surfer groups to discuss the situation before establishing hours.

"At times it looks like a demolition derby out there (and) we've had more rescues (off the sandbar area) the first couple of months of this summer than for the entire beach area for the last three years," Lang told the council.

While no one spoke up for the swimmers — they're believed to be mostly tourists,

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Surf

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anyway — three surfers urged the council to leave everything alone for this summer, or if anything is done, do it to the swimmers.

"Tourists come to see the surfers," area resident and surfer Stu Howell told the council, reminding them, "anybody can see a swimmer anytime."

He said there's plenty of other places along the coast that people can swim and bodysurf, but the sandbar that was created by winter wash-down of the river "may be a one-time thing."

It's beginning to erode into the ocean and is expected to be gone in about a month.

Councilmembers Joseph Ghio and John Mahaney said they felt it was stretching the "urgency" provision that allows immediate enforcement, but went along.

Councilman Bruce Van Allen was the only one in opposition, saying he felt things could be worked out without giving Lang authority to restrict use.

Surfers and/or swimmers will be warned of restricted times by the flying of a "blackball" flag (yellow with a blackball center) off the beach. Failure to comply could result in a ticket to the violator. Beach lifeguards have been saddled with the job of enforcing the new regulations.

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