



Michael McCollum

Watsonville police officer Oscar Soto writes up a report on the graffiti sprayed on a mausoleum in the background. Vandalism at Pioneer Cemetery has increased in recent weeks.

Pioneer Cemetery hit with graffiti

WATSONVILLE — Pioneer Cemetery workers know what to expect when they show up for work on Monday mornings: a mess.

"They tear it up every weekend," said Don Cravens, a maintenance worker.

"They" are the young people who come into the Marin Street cemetery at night, spray paint graffiti, knock down fences, vandalize gravestones and leave beer cans and trash behind.

Vandalism has always been a problem, but it's been increasing in recent weeks, said Bill Clark, maintenance supervisor.

The crew recently had to

'They tear it up every weekend,' said Don Cravens, a maintenance worker.

replace a large section of fence along the cemetery driveway off Freedom Boulevard. There's a shack in a vacant lot behind the

fence, which youths use as a hangout.

The maintenance workers figure a youth knocked out one board on the fence to get through, and a whole section came out. To avoid future occurrences, the crew left a gap at the end of the fence.

City police Lt. Jim Brown said the cemetery "is a difficult area to patrol."

It's easy to hide in the cemetery, he said, and anybody there can see the headlights of a car entering at night.

Brown said he figures there are more problems at Pioneer than other cemeteries in Watsonville because it's in a densely populated area.