

Fields of dreams *Animals*



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

David and Royalee Cleveland's plan for a north coast equestrian center is running into opposition from neighbors.

Equestrian center faces opposition

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SANTA CRUZ — The developer of an equestrian center proposed for 200 acres of north coast agricultural land hopes the county "will look at it for what it really is — a nice facility that everybody can enjoy."

Neighbors of the proposed Monterey Bay Equestrian Center, however, are already circling their wagons in opposition, even though it's barely through the

design-review stage at the county Planning Department.

Capitola businessman David Cleveland owns 206 acres of north coast agriculture land near Wilder Ranch State Park and bisected by Back Ranch Road. Cleveland and his wife, Royalee, longtime horse fanciers, bought the property about a year ago for a reported \$1.1 million.

The center would be the largest facility of its kind in the county, if not the state, say its detractors.

Some 32 acres of the property — zoned for commercial agriculture — is sowed with artichokes and brussels sprouts. The rest is grassland, two small ponds, an old quarry, a stream and a ravine.

The equestrian center includes 21 single-family residences — three of which are over 5,000 square feet each — enclosed and covered arenas, exercise and riding areas, and a number of paddocks and barns.

Cleveland views the proposed

complex as an asset to the community and a home to public events and educational programs.

"I hope that the Board of Supervisors envisions it as another recreational facility for the people of the county," he said.

But Supervisor Gary Patton sees the equestrian center as "a massive new development" that would be "swimming upstream with me."

"It asks for very significant
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changes in the county's General Plan and the Local Coastal Program," Patton said, adding that such developments are unprecedented along the north coast, part of his district.

At full strength, the complex would be home to 600 trail, jump and show horses, although Cleveland said he expected the complex to grow gradually over a five-year period.

"This will not be the Charge of the Light Brigade," he said.

"The people on Back Ranch Road are obviously all against it." One columnist for a local monthly magazine, he said, "made it look like a subdivision."

"The whole thing is really not all that exciting ... A barn is a barn."

Approximately 12 homes are located along Back Ranch Road, but Cleveland said "only three houses can even see the property."

Terri Terhaar of the Rural Bonny Doon Association said "opposition is extremely strong to the project. Everyone sees the potential precedent-setting aspects of this for the entire North Coast of the county."

"We've done some checking and it would be the largest facility of its type in the county, and conceivably it's the largest facility of its type in the state."

"If a project of this size were allowed to go in our north coast area, it could have devastating long-

term affect on our coastal grasslands," Terhaar said.

Cleveland said, "There's a big question about grasslands and all that, but it seems to me to be more of an emotional issue." The developer is prepared to do an environmental impact report for the project, which lies in the state's Coastal Zone and therefore needs Coastal Commission approval.

The three homes of 5,000 square feet or more also fall under the county's "monster house" ordinance, and would need the blessing of the supervisors. One home is for Cleveland, one is for his parents, and the other is for the center's director, the developer said.

The other 18 homes would house workers and managers from the equestrian complex, he said.

The county has expressed concern about the size of Back Ranch Road, a one-lane easement across his property. "They told us what they'd like us to do, to make it into a two-lane road."

The road is also a worry to the RBDA, said Terhaar.

"You have cars coming in for public events there. You have the cars for the people that work there. You have supplies being brought in, the feed that will have to be brought in on very large hay trucks," Terhaar said.

"Another interesting point is the question, where are these horses going to be ridden? He has stated that he plans to rent horses. The

property borders state land which in turn borders Wilder Ranch State Park," Terhaar said.

"The impact of this many horses on Wilder Ranch certainly would need to be examined, particularly if he doesn't intend to go through the front gate entrance of Wilder but proposes some back-door policy."

Cleveland confirmed the possibility of rear access to Wilder Ranch.