

Cement Ship to stay afloat

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be repaired, state says

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SEACLIFF STATE BEACH —

California State Park rangers Thursday confirmed that a major repair effort will begin next week to reopen the Cement Ship to visitors.

Beachgoers will walk the decks again, said Jack'Kirchner, a supervisor for California State Parks.

"I did an inspection on it and I feel we can probably repair what's there," Kirchner said. "I've gone ahead and designated staff time with our people to begin working on the ship. It doesn't appear to have the magnitude of damage it was thought to have during the storms."

Costs are expected to be less than \$10,000, he said. And with the help of donated materials and money, he said the question of when the gates to the deck will open is the only question that remains. And the answer could come within the next two weeks.

Ralph Tislaretz, a local poet and author whose works focusing on the ship have been published, has started to organize a volunteer crew to help the parks department.

"This is the last visible cement ship of that era," he said of the Cement Ship, which was never sent to the battle it was built for

during World War I. "Historically, it's an important thing for the community and for the tourist industry. You can't forget the tourism part."

Tislaretz wrote his latest poem about the ship just before El Nino storms battered the Seaclyff State Beach centerpiece:

"... Surrounded by a lulling lapping symphony,

Or thunderous storms and a pounding sea,

Alone alone she battles with time..."

And rangers earlier this month believed "she" may be left to deteriorate, a victim of nature.

Since that time, private donors and willing volunteers have come forward.

Tislaretz has found a group he said is ready to take the initiative.

"We have an eager crew ready to start work," he said. "They're hounding me to death about when they can begin."

And more have come forward.

Robert Podesta, of Capitola, said he was interested in getting involved in any efforts to save the ship.

"I remember, as a youngster, walking the decks with my parents," he said. "I'll never forget they had huge aquariums and the ship and gambling slot machines."

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