

Historian Norman Poitevin, third from right, leads a walk through Arana Gulch on Tuesday.

SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL PHOTOS

Arana path work to begin in spring

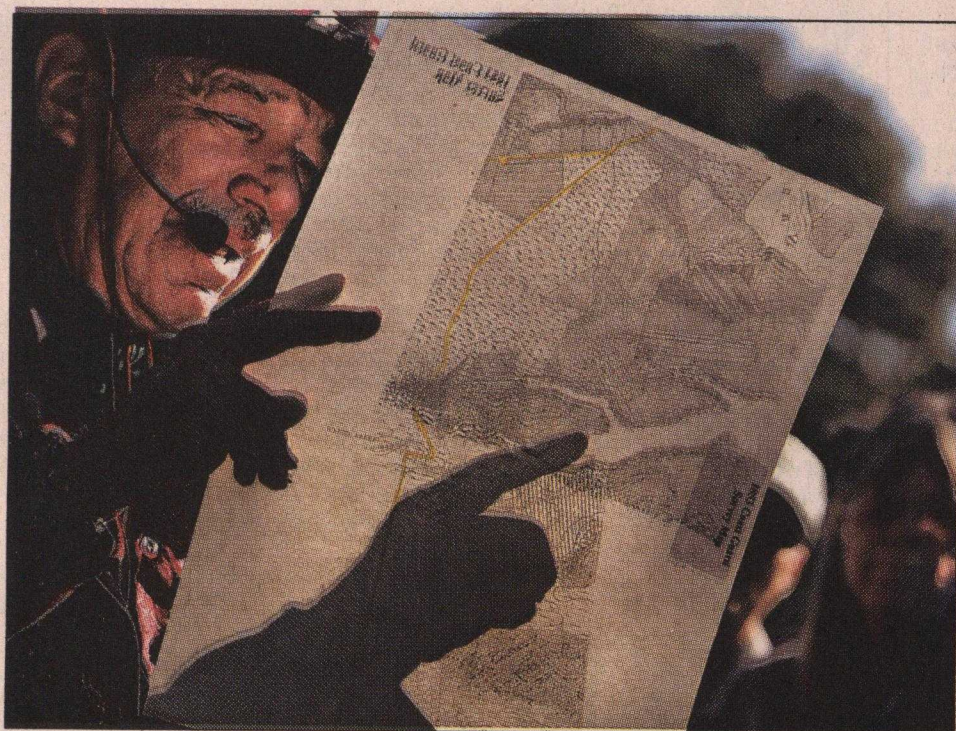
Walkers tour greenbelt as part of Live Oak history series

Greenbelt

By KIMBERLY WHITE

kwhite@santacruzsentinel.com

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Norman Poitevin uses a reproduction of an 1853 survey map to give a historic perspective on Arana Gulch.

LIVE OAK — Crews will begin work this spring on a controversial project to pave roughly 2,200 feet of trails through Arana Gulch, a 67-acre greenbelt that's home to the endangered Santa Cruz tarplant.

City Parks Superintendent Mauro Garcia gave a short talk about the project during the final Summer Walk outing hosted by the Live Oak Neighbors group Tuesday evening. At a stop overlooking a portion of Woods Lagoon, he explained crews would create an elevated platform above a culvert, making the entire area more easily accessible to everyone — including the disabled — who will use the hiking, pedestrian and multiuse trails.

The project involves partnerships with numerous organizations such as the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History, which plans to place interpretive signs at various points along the trail, as well as lead tours. The city received a conditional permit in mid-December allowing preliminary work to begin, and if all goes according to plan, the project will wrap up by the end of 2013, Garcia said.

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WALK

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His comments came during a community walk led by Norman Poitevin, who leads tours through historical areas of Live Oak as part of the Summer Walk series.

The Arana Gulch Master Plan calls for a series of pathways connecting the Eastside of Santa Cruz to Live Oak, but without traversing through areas that contain the endangered Santa Cruz tarplant. The trails will be accessible to the disabled, and officials hope the added access and interpretive signs

help to raise awareness about the area, as well as reduce the use of unauthorized trails. To view the master plan, go to www.cityofsantacruz.com/index.aspx?page=775.

During the hourlong walk, Poitevin paused at half a dozen locations, holding up historical pictures and old maps to illustrate Arana Gulch's slow growth. The area was settled by Jose Arana and his family, who arrived from Mexico in the 1830s.

Their son was killed, but his wife, Esperanza Arana, received a patent in 1867 for up to 40 acres, he told the group. She eventually sold the land to Frank Hagemann, whose name lives on in the form of nearby Hagemann

Avenue. The large house he built in the late 1870s still stands near Hagemann Gulch, where a bridge will soon be built to connect Arana Gulch with the Eastside.

The Hagemanns eventually sold the land to the Kinzli family, which held on to it until the city purchased it in 1994 as part of an effort to acquire area greenbelts, Poitevin said. Asked why it took the city so long to get around to doing anything with the land, he just laughed.

"Eighteen years," he said. "That's the speed of government."

Follow Sentinel reporter Kimberly White on Twitter @kwhite95066