

# Coast Dairy funds survive

## Wilson cuts money for Bombay land

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SANTA CRUZ — State funding to complete the purchase of the 7,500-acre Coast Dairy property survived the governor's blue pencil Tuesday, but the news wasn't as good for the Bombay greenbelt parcel.

Gov. Wilson's decision to keep \$5 million for Coast Dairy land in the state budget means one of the more remarkable coastal areas of the state will be protected from development.

The state money was the final piece of funding needed to make the \$43 million purchase. More than \$37 million in private funds and \$1 million in Coastal Conservancy funds also are available to buy the North Coast property.

"I couldn't be happier," said Laura Perry, executive director of the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, which was among the groups that made a last-ditch blitz to urge Wilson to keep Coast Dairy funding in the budget. "It's wonderful news."

State Sen. Bruce McPherson, R-Santa Cruz, called the \$5 million allocation a "wise investment to protect this land for all future generations. ... There is no better time, considering our current budget windfall, to protect one of our most precious natural resources."

McPherson said being able to complete the Coast Dairy purchase was the best news he's had since going to Sacramento five years ago.

"It's not too many times you get to protect 7,000 acres-plus in one fell swoop," said McPherson.

Reaction to Wilson's decision to cut \$1 million earmarked for the 246-acre Bombay property on the city's western edge obviously was less enthusiastic.

"It's definitely a bummer," said Councilman Mike Rotkin.

But both of the area's legislators said there's still hope the governor could be persuaded to restore the money.

Assemblyman Fred Keeley, D-Boulder Creek, said he thinks the governor took projects out of the budget to use as leverage over key legislators as he tries to accomplish his goals in the coming week.

"There's an awful lot that will happen between now and the end of the legislative session," said Keeley. "I think Bombay is an extraordinarily important project and I will continue my efforts ... to get it restored into the budget."

Keeley's comments were echoed by McPherson, who said he expects the governor to restore some of the projects.

"I'm not giving up on it," said McPherson. "We have a pretty good success rate at getting the governor's ear ... (and) Bombay would be at the top of my list. It is my number-one priority."

If money isn't available from the state budget, there will be more pressure on local officials to convince city voters to pass a \$7 million

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bond measure in November. Part of that money would be used to buy Bombay.

"A million dollars is a drop in the bucket in the state budget, but for us it means a great deal," said Mayor Celia Scott. "Obviously it will be disappointing if the money is not included in the state budget, but it won't be fatal if the bond is passed."

Vice Mayor Scott Kennedy said it will take political clout to get the Bombay funding restored into the state budget.

"I think what this says is Fred Keeley's hard work and political clout is primarily responsible for getting it into the budget, and it's going to take Sen. McPherson's clout to get it back in," said Kennedy.

Even if the governor refuses to restore the Bombay funding, there still is a chance local officials could convince the Wildlife Conservation Board or the Coastal Conservancy to help save the land from development.

It was the Coastal Conservancy that helped buy the Coast Dairy land, which is one of the three

largest coastal properties between the Golden Gate Bridge and the Mexican border that remains unprotected.

The dairy property was optioned by the San Francisco-based Save-the-Redwoods League in 1997, saving it from development until money could be raised to buy it.

The land includes redwoods, wetlands, protected species, six major beaches and more than seven miles of coastline.

Staff writer Robin Musitelli contributed to this report.