

Endangered Species
SUPERVISORS WON'T SIGN

Now, Salamanders Doomed

By BOB LIGON
Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — The tenuous life chain of the almost extinct long-toed Santa Cruz

salamander snapped Tuesday — the victim of bureaucratic boondoggling.

Santa Cruz County Supervisors sealed the fate of the 20-

000-year-old life form by refusing to review a hold-harmless agreement.

Scientists have sought the agreement to enable them to go onto the property to refill

the salamanders' breeding pond. Larvae in the pond will bake to death in a few days without moisture. The pond now is almost dry.

"This is absolutely incredible," said Alan Holbert, Cabrillo College biologist appointed by the supervisors to coordinate the Save-the-Salamander effort. "It undoes all we've done to date," he said.

Supervisors gave no reason for their stand. Without comment, they refused to support Supervisor Ralph Sanson's motion to renew the agreement.

Holbert had appeared before supervisors under an emergency item on the agenda.

"I'm rather chagrined and angry about this whole thing," said Holbert. "They appointed me to do the job but they gave me absolutely no support."

The salamanders got nationwide publicity four months ago when word got out that its breeding pond was to be taken over by a mobile home park.

Scientists and politicians from all parts of the country converged here to save the species. Supervisors, after a marathon hearing, denied zoning for the mobile home park.

Supervisors in recent weeks have indicated disenchantment with the salamander effort. They blame state and federal officials for not coming through on promises to buy the salamanders' breeding pond, which is located near La Selva Beach.



DRY POND—Ellen Leach, 12, of La Selva Beach, checks a salamander trap at Ellicott Pond, which is almost dry. Lack of moisture there is threat-

ening the unborn generation of the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander, which are almost extinct.

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through on promises to buy the salamanders' breeding pond, which is located near La Selva Beach.

However, Holbert said that \$125,000 has been approved to save the salamanders here, which is on the nation's endangered species list.

Holbert said that \$83,000 of that amount will go to acquire Ellicott Pond near La Selva Beach, and that \$42,000 would go toward restoring Valencia Pond at Aptos.

Holbert said that the appropriation has been approved both by Assembly and Senate committees and is expected to have smooth sailing through the Legislature.

Owners of Ellicott Pond had agreed to allow scientists on the property if the county would enter into a hold-harmless agreement. The agreement merely states that the county, not the property owners, would be responsible for any damage or injuries as a result of the salamander project.

Scientists want access to the property so they can use a well there to pump water for the pond.

The adult salamanders last February traveled to their mating pond, only to find it dry. The property owners in the county entered into a hold-harmless agreement at that time to allow the scientists to refill the pond.

The adult salamanders have since retreated to a nearby willow grove where they will continue to live until next spring. The larvae was expected to leave the pond the latter part of this month in order to join the adults.

"But it looks like they're doomed now," said Holbert.