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# 'No more studies,' say Grey Whale Ranch owners

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SANTA CRUZ — Owners of the Grey Whale Ranch will ask the Board of Supervisors to overrule an order by the county Planning Commission for more studies of Sequoia Forest Industries' plan to log the 2,300 scenic acres near UC Santa Cruz.

Attorney J. Steven Worthley said Friday that SFI will fight the commission's demand for more wildlife studies, and he also said the company may soon begin cutting trees on a portion of the ranch to allow an eventual extension of a state-issued timber harvest permit.

The Planning Commission delayed a hearing on the logging plan for three months Wednesday and ordered SFI to conduct detailed studies of the animals, birds and mushrooms in the timber harvest area.

Plans to log the ranch have been

the focus of a bitter conflict since early last year. Opponents of the logging plan want the property to be purchased for use as a state park.

During a heated exchange at Wednesday's meeting, Worthley refused to accept the commission's demand for more information, saying the company would not spend any more money on wildlife studies. He estimated the studies would cost over \$100,000 and take another year to complete.

Worthley also questioned the commission's authority to require the studies, and challenged the county's interpretation of an open space agreement it holds on part of the property.

A permit to log 310 acres of the Grey Whale Ranch was granted by the State Board of Forestry in March in spite of strong opposition from the county and activist groups. The county, along with the

Sierra Club and a neighborhood group called Save the Grey Whale Parklands, has since filed a lawsuit challenging the harvest permit.

While the suit is pending, the county's only authority to oversee the logging plan is contained in an open space agreement signed in 1972 by the county and a former owner of the Grey Whale Ranch.

The open space agreement, which expires in 1992, covers about 75 percent of the harvest area, according to Worthley.

The agreement specifically bars loggers from cutting more than half of the trees measuring over 18 inches in diameter on the site. Loggers may also be prohibited from

cutting any trees over 60 inches in diameter, or any other specific trees which the county deems important. The agreement also gives the county the right to review the placement of logging roads and trails on the site.

In addition, the county is arguing that language in the contract protecting "unique physical characteristics" and "scenic" resources on the property allows the county to require special protection for mushrooms, birds, wildlife and limestone caves on the property.

Worthley believes the county is interpreting the agreement's language too broadly in an attempt to obstruct the logging plan and

allow activists more time to find funds to buy the property. In over a year of concerted effort by local legislators, no money has yet been found to buy the ranch, which is on the market for \$11 million. Earlier this month, Governor Deukmejian vetoed \$2.2 million in state funds to buy part of the land.

The open space agreement is set to expire shortly before the timber harvest permit expires, but if the property owner shows good cause for delay and has begun a portion of the timber harvest, the permit may be extended for another year or two.

Worthley confirmed Friday that

the company might move to cut timber on a portion of the land not covered by the open space agreement, to allow an eventual extension of the harvest permit.

But some opponents of the logging plan believe SFI will never make the threatened cuts because the company has no legal way to remove the cut logs from the property unless the county allows it to.

Although a lawsuit challenging the harvest permit has been filed, San Francisco attorney Joe Brecher confirmed Friday that an injunction temporarily forbidding logging has not been sought yet.