

Little by little, crashing waves took their toll on Capitola Wharf

By KEITH MURAOKA
Sentinel Staff Writer

CAPITOLA — It was like trying to stand up on a boat being tossed around in storm-ravaged seas. What made it scarier, however, was the fact it wasn't a boat but the end of Capitola Wharf.

After eight months and nearly \$800,000 to renovate the century-old wharf last year, Thursday morning's storm has closed it again. This morning's high tide reportedly did not cause any apparent further damage.

City Manager Steve Burrell gave The Sentinel a damage estimate of \$100,000. His optimistic timeline for repair is 90 days.

Gone is 25 to 30 feet at the end of the wharf, some 1,200 square feet. About two-thirds of the way down the now-closed wharf, the deck is buckled where pilings underneath gave way. The surface looks like a roller coaster track.

"On the Wharf," the new restaurant that just opened last July, now sits in a very precarious position at the wharf's end. Its ocean-facing wall at the end is torn apart, subject to the ocean's full fury.

"On the Wharf now could be called On the Beach," said owner Rick Karleen, trying to find some humor in a tragic situation.

Karleen and his employees worked hard Thursday salvaging what they could from what is now simply an open-air shell. Ocean spray flew through the missing wall and that portion of the wharf rocked like a boat with each heavy wave.

Karleen was quick to point out to reporters that they were there at their own risk.

"We're definitely out of business," he said. "What will happen as far as fixing the restaurant, we'll have to see. I am worried about what might be next to go."

Of course, one of the biggest factors around Karleen's repair is the city's repair of the wharf. Last time, the renovation took a year with the state Wildlife Conservation Board participating with the city on a 75-25 percent basis.

Burrell's 90-day timeline is based on the fact that the city had already set the wheels in motion two weeks ago. The City Council approved a "beefing up" of the wharf for damage sustained in December.

Burrell is hopeful all the new damage could be repaired by ordering an additional 10 pilings.

"The wharf always moved a little sideways with the ocean current," he said. "Now, however, it's also moving back and forth."

For Karleen, the storm is a particu-

larly hard pill to swallow.

He was instrumental in starting the city's process to acquire and renovate the wharf. After paying \$140,000 for the storm-damaged structure, Karleen gave ownership of it to the city in exchange for commercial rights for the next 25 years.

The restaurant was the wharf's primary commercial business. He also operated a bait and tackle shop and boat-launching and mooring facility.

"The first thing I thought when I saw the damage was 'what did I do wrong to deserve this,'" Karleen told The Sentinel. "I don't think Mother Nature has a personal vendetta against me, but then I could be wrong."

Karleen was there when the ocean took away the end of the wharf. He watched as huge waves slowly loosened the structure.

"One big wave after another would knock a piece out at a time," he said. "Then, suddenly a big section went out at once. Within half an hour (around 7 a.m. Thursday), it was gone."

Karleen's wife, Jennifer, added: "It was a lot of hard work and sweat; now there's tears. What else can you say?"



Rick Karleen gazes through gaping hole in his restaurant.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Waves chip away at Capitola Wharf Thursday.

REFERENCE

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL
January 28, 1983