

Dispute over Gray Whale damage remains unresolved

Sentinel staff report

SANTA CRUZ — County planners say a dispute over a environmental damage at Gray Whale Ranch remains unresolved.

Representatives of the property near UC Santa Cruz said Thursday that a meeting with county officials had resolved the matter. Ranch property manager John Steinbacher said he did not expect charges to be filed in connection with the Nov. 14 bulldozing of a ranch road.

County officials said otherwise Friday.

"The issue hasn't been decided one way or the other," said Pete

Parkinson, the county's chief environmental planner. "It remains to be seen. Charges were not discussed at the meeting. We made no commitment not to file."

The county's environmental attorney has described the damage as "serious," saying fines as high as \$50,000 plus \$5,000 a day could be imposed.

The issue of the erosion itself is also unresolved, Parkinson said. Besides taking immediate measures to control erosion, Gray Whale representatives must prepare a plan that describes how the damaged habitat, including a stream, will be restored.