

Locals pleased as punch over Porter Sesnon deal

Porter Sesnon
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Gov. Pete Wilson's approval of a plan to purchase the Porter Sesnon property has made a lot of local officials happy.

"It's going to be a truly wonderful addition to the state parks system," said Victor Roth, state park land agent at the Santa Cruz district office of the state Department of Parks and Recreation. "We should be really grateful."

The property came one step closer to becoming a part of the California State Park system when Wilson signed legislation this week approving the last financing necessary to acquire the property, which lies between Seacliff and New Brighton State beaches.

Purchasing the 72-acre meadow, which would be added to New Brighton State Beach, was called a "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity by State Sen. Henry Mello, the Watsonville Democrat who has worked vigorously to make the land a state park.

"I'm happy," Mello said. "We're getting a good buy because it's for public use. The money's up and the bank knows we've got the bill signed. It's going to happen."

The scenic land is so "precious," he said, that when he presented it in the legislature,

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two senators jokingly suggested they personally try to buy it.

Palo Alto developer Ryland Kelley tried for several years to develop the land as a combination hotel/conference center and performing-arts complex, but his proposal was defeated by voters in 1988 due to concerns about the density of the development. Kelley had purchased a 99-year lease on the property, which is owned by the University of California. The lease is now owned by the First Nationwide Bank.

About \$3.5 million has been approved for the purchase, including \$2 million in park funds from the state Department of Parks and Recreation and the state Coastal Conservancy, and \$1.5 million from existing bond funds.

Before the land becomes a park, however, a public hearing will be held Sept. 28 at 7:30 p.m. at Capitola Community Center, 4400 Jade St., Capitola. The proposal would then go back to the legislature, where it has 30 days to be approved, said Ken Collier, of the state Department of Parks and Recreation.

Park officials said there are currently no plans to develop the park and if developments are to occur, amendments would have to be made to the General Plan.