

Seawall hearing delayed

SOME FOES OF CLIFF PROJECT
FEAR DAMAGE TO SURFING SPOT

Beach Erosion By David L. Beck *SMN 8-5-03*
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A public airing of the controversial Pleasure Point seawall project, 1,100 feet of coastal armoring that some say would protect a crumbling cliff-side and others claim would damage a celebrated surfing spot, has been put off until October.

But not for lack of interest. Quite the reverse, in fact.

With nearly 300 public comments to sort through, the Army Corps of Engineers was unable to finish its environmental report in time for this week's meeting of the California Coastal Commission.

The project is expected to be considered at the October commission meeting in Coronado.

The project has three parts.

The one that the commission was to have considered involves building a textured concrete wall in front of the cliff at Pleasure Point near Capitola. The cliff has so badly eroded from the force of the waves and the action of winter rainfall that East Cliff Drive, atop the cliff, is down to one lane.

In part two, Santa Cruz County would replace the sewer pipes and rebuild the road. Part three is a smaller armoring project at a spot called the Hook, about a quarter-mile south.

Corps of Engineers environmental planner Sarah Cameron said the comments collected after a series of spring public meetings were little different from those the public voiced during the meetings.

They include fears for the quality of surfing at the Point; backing for what is called "planned retreat" — that is, letting nature have its way with the cliff, buying property on the other side of East Cliff and moving the road; concerns about the movement of sand from the narrow beach at the bottom of the cliff; and broader concerns about coastal armoring

See SEAWALL, Page 4B

Y, AUGUST 5, 2003 LOCAL

SEAWALL | Project hearing delayed

Continued from Page 1B

in general.

On the agenda Wednesday when the Coastal Commission meets at the Huntington Beach Hyatt Regency are:

■ The West Cliff Drive bike and pedestrian path in Santa Cruz. A plan to widen the path and narrow the street was rejected by the Coastal Commission in May despite a recommendation in its favor from commission staff members. Wednesday's vote will be to accept a revised staff report. Susan Craig, a staff analyst in the commission's Santa Cruz office, called it only a technicality.

The commission is holding up the project until Santa Cruz completes its "integrated management plan" for West Cliff, which the state requires.

■ Objections to a small gravel parking lot, mile-long trail and scenic overlook across Highway 1 from Pigeon Point. San Mateo County planners and supervisors have approved the project by the Peninsula Open Space Trust, which owns the 4,733-acre Cloverdale Coastal Ranch there.

The objections are based on frog and snake habitat, and on potential agricultural use of the adjoining land.

The Coastal Commission agenda is at www.coastal.ca.gov/mtgcurr.html.

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