

Davenport Residents Up In Arms About 'Campers;' Ask For Help

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"People are fed up with having their things stolen, vandalized and their bathrooms messed up. . . it's like we're on guard duty," said one Davenport resident describing the community's mood over an influx of illegal campers in their ocean front town.

Residents of the small community say they are unhappy with the campers who arrive with their buses and tents to live permanently on the beaches, bluffs and streets of Davenport.

Wednesday, representatives met with Sheriff Al Noren to discuss the growing problem.

Noren promised a crackdown on the campers — but only after his office has established the the

names of property owners in the area and obtains permission to have the squatters moved.

"We'll do something about it as soon as we have the proper authorization," said Noren.

But, he added, the district attorney's office has told sheriff's deputies not to cite campers along the coast because of the time and expense involved in bringing the campers to trial without the authorization of the property owners.

The district attorney's office is looking into the problem, according to Richard Power, assistant district attorney. "But," he said, "we want to investigate the situation more fully in terms of ownership and access to the property."

Residents of the community Wednesday said the influx of squatters is disturbing the quiet at-

mosphere of their coastal town.

Residents agreed that while they didn't mind the one-night camper, it was those who stay for weeks or even months that is a cause for concern.

One homeowner estimated there were eight to 20 makeshift campers that have set up permanent housekeeping in and around Davenport.

The campers have taken up lodging on the main streets of town, on the beaches and in nearby fields.

"They use the back of my place as a bathroom," said one of the residents who did not wish to be identified. "They are living right in town on a street that runs right along the post office."

Said one woman, "It's just getting completely out of hand."

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Some eight to 10 people are estimated to live on a beach near the town, said one resident. Children are being accosted and bothered by the campers, she claimed.

"We're worried about our families or someone getting hurt," said one young man. "The bar has turned into a free-for-all. Another business is a free-for-all. It's like we're on guard duty, OK?"

Each indicated they would cooperate with Noren to get the proper authorization to have the campers moved from their town.

"It's going to turn into another community that's bigger than Davenport," said an unidentified resident.

Noren said that while he sympathized with the plight of the north coast property owners, he was unable to act until boundary lines and property owners were pinpointed to landowners.

He said a deputy is looking through assessor's files to get property owner's names.

A sheriff's representative and some members of the community are scheduled to meet with in the district attorney's office to discuss the problem Friday.

Their complaints come in the wake of the arrest of a group of

campers who set up makeshift buses and homes on a bluff near Scott Creek and were arrested by sheriff's deputies for trespassing.

A recent trial for the Scott Creek campers ended with a hung jury on trespassing charges and acquittal on charges of camping without a property owner's permission.

"There's a lot of frustration up there," said one Davenport resident. "It's getting to the point where its affecting the community in a rather serious way."

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