

Volunteers being mobilized to develop new park in Aptos

By LANE WALLACE
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Leaders of youth soccer and baseball leagues are wasting no time rounding up volunteers to develop fields at Polo Grounds County Park in Aptos.

"I'll be on the phones this afternoon," Larry Biggam, president of the Aptos Soccer Club, said yesterday after learning the Santa Cruz County Planning Commission had approved a master plan for development of the fields.

Biggam, who also coaches Little League, said the soccer club can work together with youth baseball and softball groups.

Although the master plan was approved, there is no county money allocated for development of the 62-acre site, off Huntington and Soquel drives near Aptos Junior High School.

The first phase of Polo Grounds development calls for an access road off Huntington Drive, a parking area for 78 cars, two soccer fields and two baseball fields. The cost is estimated at \$2.4 million, but that would be reduced somewhat because the planning commission is not requiring a fully paved parking lot and road yet.

"We can get a lot of volunteer effort" in time, expertise and money, said Biggam. "I think the community will respond."

Biggam said he hopes to get some fields in by next year, but won't know for sure until he gets some cost estimates.

Eileen Hewett, treasurer of Aptos Little League, said the league has been saving "in anticipation of" approval from the county. The league has saved \$30,000, she said.

Hewett and Biggam said their leagues are hampered by the lack of playing fields in Aptos. With no county-owned fields in Midcounty, sports teams have only school fields.

Biggam said he appreciates the cooperation of the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, but said some of the fields are used so much there's hardly any grass on them.

Some fields, particularly at Bradley School in Corralitos, have gopher-hole problems, Biggam said.

The Aptos Soccer Club, which has players ages 6 to 18, has grown from 430 to 694 players in three years, Biggam said. Aptos Little League has 460 players and has had to limit growth because of the lack of fields, Hewett said.

Walt Symons, county supervisor for the Aptos area, has asked the county parks department to come up with a plan for developing fields in the area.