

EROSION

Tenants ordered to move

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Capitola apartments
hanging over cliff

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CAPITOLA — Citing potential danger from continuing erosion, the city has ordered tenants to move from four units in the Crest Apartments, which hang precariously over the cliffs on Depot Hill.

The residents, one of whom has already left, have until Nov. 30 to move.

Gary Reece, a spokesman for Crest Investors Limited, owners of the 34-unit apartment complex, said they are complying with the order. At the same time, however, they have appealed the order and have hired a structural engineer to propose improvements to make the complex safe.

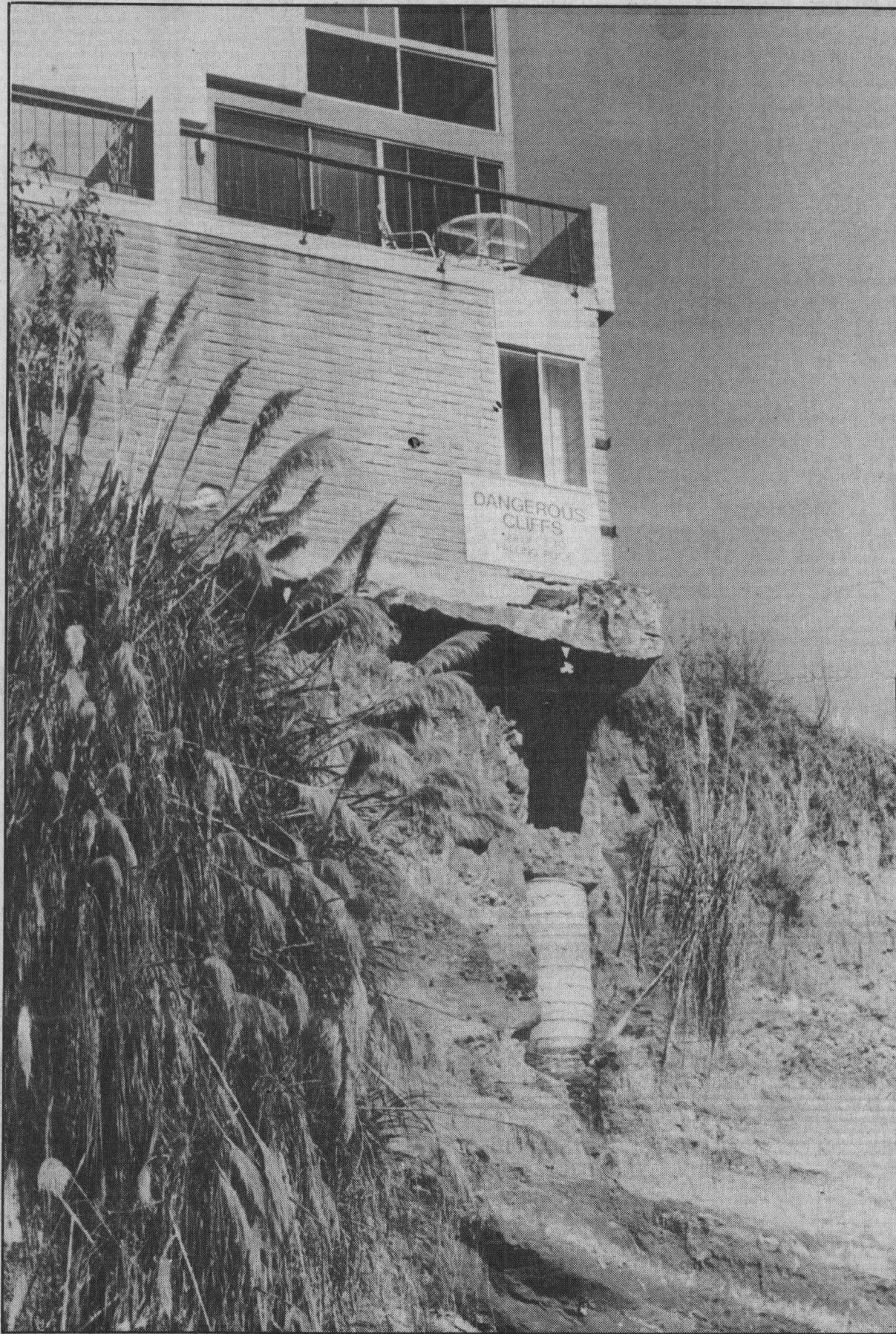
That appeal will not supercede the city's order, said Capitola Building Official Daniel Kostelec. It was Kostelec who issued the order based on a report by Santa Cruz geologist Gary Griggs. That report was paid for — and initiated — by Crest's owners.

According to Reece, Crest Investors Limited has gone to great lengths to shore up the overhanging apartments on Grand Avenue since buying the 23-year-old complex in 1979. In the summer of 1983, the group spent an estimated \$500,000 for 10 three-foot diameter steel-reinforced concrete beams to solidify the foundation.

Continuing cliff erosion, though, including two large failures each involving 200-250 cubic yards of material, occurred directly beneath and downcoast from the most precariously perched unit this past summer. That unit has a corner portion completely undermined.

While Grigg's report stopped short of recommending any evictions, Kostelec issued the order. "It's my responsibility to make the determination as to when it's a life-

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Four units in the Crest Apartments hang precariously over the Depot Hill cliffs.

Tenants

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safety hazard," Kostelec said.

Reece, who said investors filed an appeal of the order "just to preserve our rights," conceded they have no way of knowing if the order was "needed or not."

"We decided for everyone's safety — since we don't want anything to happen to anybody — that we'll comply with the safe course of action," added Reece.

Those who aren't happy with the situation include Crest's co-manager and some of the residents.

Co-Manager June Andrew said, "We don't feel there's any immediate danger." Said Art Fletcher, one of the tenants forced to move (he was lucky enough to find a vacant unit in the same complex), "We're not in fear of anything. Our apartment sits on ground. One of the reinforced beams is right underneath us."

Dana Smith, another tenant, isn't as fortunate as Fletcher. His apartment is the most precariously perched of the four units. He'll soon be forced to move to Santa Cruz.

While Smith also "wasn't worried for my safety," he said the two most

recent cliff failures underneath and near his unit were frightening.

"It felt just like an earthquake," said Smith. "The whole place trembled."

According to geologist Griggs, those two large failures involved slabs of cliff up to 9 feet thick. Additionally, one of those failures "exposed the next potential failure area to the west, which could fall at any time," he wrote in his report.

Griggs summarized, "The coastal bluffs at the Crest Apartment site are rapidly eroding at long-term average rates of .70 and .85 feet per year. The site is a particularly difficult one due to the height of the seacliff, the extent of the present undermining and likelihood of additional failure in the near future beneath the apartments..."

Griggs said that structural engineers hired by Crest Investors Limited are looking at a series of beams cantilevered from the cliffs for additional support, as well as a concrete wall at the base of the cliffs that would include a concrete "plug" to fill the undercut that has formed due to ocean erosion. There are no cost estimates at present.