Capitola may get help with crumbling cliffs

Capitola may finally be getting some help from the federal government on its cliff erosion problems.

Rep. Leon Panetta, D-Carmel Valley, told Capitola City Council members recently that the Army Corps of Engineers is now surveying the Santa Cruz County coastline to see if the Corps-sponsored construction of the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor accelerated beachfront erosion downcoast from the harbor mouth.

If so, then a precedent recently set in Southern California would require the federal government to pay the costs of repairing the erosion damage, Panetta said.

Capitola city officials started looking for federal help two years ago when the ocean renewed its attack on the Grand Avenue cliffs in Capitola.

Last year, federal officials refused to allocate disaster funds to repair the damage.

Panetta told four of the councilmembers during a special session called Aug. 11, that if the Corps finds that the federal project at the yacht harbor has damaged the downcoast coast line, then Congress would be obligasted to appropriate enough money to repair all of the damage, including the Capitola cliffs, the congressman said.

Capitola should be pretty well insulated from the effects of the first year of the Reagan Administration budget cuts, Panetta said.

The budget has been cut $37.2 billion, Panetta told the council.

Panetta outlined the impacts on federal programs, that in the past, have provided large amounts of money to cities including Capitola.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant program, which now supplies money for Capitola's housing rehabilitation program, was cut to $4.1 billion, down $300 million from the amounts originally requested.

Panetta said he didn't Capitola would see much impact, however.

A companion program, the Urban Development Assistance Program, lost $200 million, ending up with $500 million.

Subsidized housing was allocated $18 billion this year, enough for 350,000 new housing starts. Congress cut 25,000 new subsidized housing units from the bill, and started a five year program that will see the percentage of income an eligible person pays as rent rise form today's 25 percent to 30 percent in five years.

CETA — the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act — was allocated $3.9 billion but eliminated the public service categories — Titles II-D and VI.

States lost their federal revenue sharing, but cities and counties will get it continued for the next three years at $4.6 billion a year.

The Community Services Agency has been abolished, Panetta said, but groups like the Santa Cruz County Community Action Board will still receive 90 percent federal funding through block grants.

Federal highway funds have been cut $500 million, virtually eliminating them as a source for local road building, Panetta said.

Social Service block grants were cut $720 million from the original proposals.

The Economic Development Admionistration, targeted for complete elimination by the Reagan Administration, was budgeted $290 million, but the money will only bne used for construction projects.

The Environmental Protection Adminstration's Clean Water Act funds, used to assist local communities in building sewage treatment facilities, were cut completely.

Panetta said he views the cut as the forerunner to major revisions, and possible repeal, of the Clean Water Act, and also the federal air pollution regulations.

"Communities supposed to meet conditions under the Clean Water Act will be caught between a rock and a hard place," Panetta said. "The likelihood is that there will be legislation changing or repealing the Act."

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