

# Santa Cruz/Monterey

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California  
Youth Authority

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## State heeds pleas to keep youth camp open

### Ben Lomond center, three others won't be closed

Special to the Mercury News

The California Youth Authority, in response to urging from dozens of Santa Cruz County residents, has decided to keep open its Ben Lomond camp for youthful offenders.

The CYA, faced with a 3 percent agencywide budget cut, had planned to trim costs by closing the Ben Lomond site and four other camps, replacing them with centers for adult felons. When the proposal was made public in late August, however, many county residents and neighbors of

the camp protested.

On Monday, CYA officials announced they will keep Ben Lomond and three other camps open. Ben Lomond and Pine Grove in Amador County will continue to operate with youth authority wards from juvenile courts.

The other two camps, Mount Bullion in Mariposa County and Washington Ridge in Nevada County, will house criminal court wards now in the CYA camp system.

More than 50 people crowded into a Santa Cruz County Superior Court room

last month to plead with CYA officials to keep the Ben Lomond camp open.

The speakers included county supervisors, Assemblyman Sam Farr, representatives from Sen. Henry Mello's office, parole officers, fire chiefs, ex-offenders, parks officials, librarians, recovering drug addicts, businessmen and neighbors of the Ben Lomond Youth Conservation Camp. They were unanimous in urging the CYA to keep the Ben Lomond camp open; several speakers, overcome with emotion, had to halt their testimony.

"This decision by the CYA was determined to a great extent by the quality of the presentations made by local residents," Farr said.

The camp, which opened in 1947, houses about 100 juveniles at a time and is operated in conjunction with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. Inmates fight fires, clear and improve streams, build trails, and help after floods, earthquakes and other disasters.

"I'm extremely pleased that the CYA decided to keep the Ben Lomond camp open and functioning under its current capacity with juvenile wards," Farr said.

CYA Director C.A. Terhune said the youth authority still will meet its mandated \$8.9 million budget cut. Reductions in staffing and operations will be made at Ben Lomond, three other CYA camps and two CYA clinics to save \$7.3 million.

Terhune said the remaining \$1.6 million will come from all other CYA departments, including executive offices, parole services, prevention and community corrections and administrative services.

The CYA will close its Fenner Canyon Camp in Los Angeles County by transferring it to the California Department of Corrections to house adult felons.