

✓ Long Marine Lab plans expansion

By JOHN ROBINSON
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SANTA CRUZ — UC Santa Cruz is planning to buy 15 acres of private land next to Long Marine Laboratory so the facility can triple in size over the next three years.

The proposed land purchase is part of a detailed plan being put together by the university which will be submitted to both the UC Regents for approval and the city of Santa Cruz.

"It is clear that the future for the Long Marine Laboratory is very bright if we are able to acquire additional land," said Michael Houlemard, UCSC director of community planning and land development. "We have been in regular discussions with the property owner."

Houlemard said the full lab expansion will require a connection to city utilities, such as water and sewage services. The 15 acres are part of a 60-acre parcel

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owned by Wells Fargo Bank.

While the city has endorsed laboratory expansion in the past, the scale of the new plans will raise a number of complicated, and possible controversial issues, according to city Planning Director Peter Katzlberger.

In addition to requiring city services, the expansion would more than double the amount of traffic and visitors coming into the lab, and be built on land currently zoned for housing.

"In theory they are an independent state agency and can do with their land what they want," Katzlberger said. "The city doesn't have any direct regulatory power over it. But the university is not an island unto itself. ... It is going to be a fairly complicated process."

Houlemard said the university is pursuing two tracks on the expansion: one in preparing a master plan and environmental impact report for the regents to endorse and fund, and a second presentation for the city.

Houlemard said the university will work closely with the city and hopes that the full expansion will be flexible enough to fit in with the city's newly approved general plan.

A number of public meetings on the plan will also

be held in upcoming months, Houlemard said.

The current lab is on about 12 acres, half of which is undeveloped. That land does not include Younger Lagoon, a 26-acre nature preserve on the north edge of the lab property.

According to a UCSC planning document, the proposed expansion includes the following major elements.

- The construction of a 60,000- to 80,000-square-foot building to house the United State Geological Survey Branch of Pacific Marine Geology, including offices and laboratories.

- A 9,500-square-foot visitor center to replace the existing Long Marine Lab aquarium building. The new center is expected to draw up to 80,000 visitors per year, double that of the existing center.

- The expansion of the existing 1.5-acre US Abalone Aquaculture facility to six acres if there is enough room to accommodate it.

If for some reason the university cannot acquire the lands, much of the expansion cannot happen, according to the documents.

If it all goes as planned, Houlemard said most of the construction would be done by the summer of 1995.