

Arana Gulch plan not dead yet

Coastal Commissioner Stone wants project reconsidered

Greenbelt
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SANTA CRUZ — The city's failed plans for Arana Gulch may get another chance.

After the California Coastal Commission on Thursday rejected the city's bid to put trails in the 68-acre greenbelt, Commissioner Mark Stone of Santa Cruz County, who was on the losing end of the vote, wants the commission to reconsider, and he's trying to make that happen.

"The commissioners made very specific comments about (the plan), and I honestly think some of them can be overcome," Stone said.

Friday morning, Stone made a request of his colleagues to waive the six-month waiting period required of failed projects before they can return for reconsideration. If that happens, which the commission will likely vote on at its next meeting, the city could promptly resubmit its plan.

City officials said Friday they'd welcome any opportunity to revive plans for Arana Gulch, but they hadn't had time to plot their

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The paths in Arana Gulch will remain unpaved following a 5-5 deadlock in the California Coastal Commission vote Thursday. SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

PLAN

Continued from A1

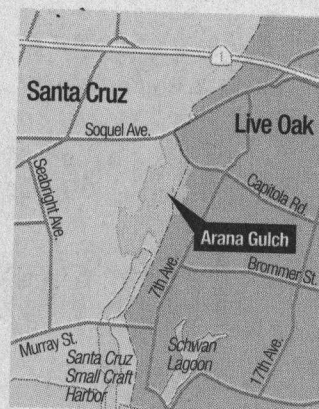
strategy since Thursday's rejection.

The city, which bought the greenbelt above Santa Cruz harbor in 1994, is hoping to build a network of trails there. The main draw would be a paved bicycle path from Santa Cruz, at Broadway, to the community of Live Oak, at Brommer Street.

Although the city plan sought to preserve much of the area's natural landscape, the Coastal Commission criticized the plan for not doing enough to protect the endangered Santa Cruz tarplant, a plant found in only a few places beyond Arana Gulch. Several commissioners suggested city planners were giving lip service to the environment while trying to push through transportation goals.

Thursday's vote of 5 to 5 by the commission, which meant the plan failed, means approval would be just one vote away, if the plan is reconsidered.

Stone on Friday declined to say which commissioner he thought might change his mind or whether he expected the two commissioners absent



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Thursday to support the plan, just that he thought it could succeed.

"I would not have arranged this if I wasn't optimistic," he said.

The city's parks superintendent Steve Hammack, who has been pushing the Arana Gulch project, said Friday that getting the commission to revisit the plan would be "a good thing." He said this option would be foremost in the city's discussions next week on how to proceed.

One of the concerns for city officials Thursday was that \$2.7 million of funding for the plan would dry up if the plan didn't move forward. Conversely, if city officials try to alter the plan to appease the

Coastal Commission, they might not meet the terms of the funding.

"It really wouldn't be productive of us to propose a plan we can't fulfill," said City Councilman Don Lane, a supporter of the project. "That's the dilemma we're caught in."

The Regional Transportation Commission, which has helped secure the money for the Arana Gulch plan, said Friday that most of the funding, which comes from more than half a dozen sources, would probably be secure at least through the end of the year.

"I'm hoping there is a way to go forward with this plan," said Lane. "If (Mark) feels like reconsideration is a good approach, I'd be supportive of going that route."