

GRAY WHALE RANCH 3-26-91 1B

135 homes^{SJM} proposed on Gray Whale Ranch

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Certain to raise the hackles of environmentalists, a proposal to build 135 homes on the rural Gray Whale Ranch near Bonny Doon has been submitted to the Santa Cruz County Planning Department.

Although property owner Ron Yanke of Boise, Idaho, has not filed an application for his development — which is sure to stir opposition in environment-conscious Santa Cruz — he has sent the county a document outlining his proposal.

Yanke's 2,300 acres of forest and meadows stretch for about six miles along the

west side of Empire Grade — across the road from the 2,000-acre campus of the University of California, Santa Cruz. The huge ranch also abuts the Wilder Ranch State Park, located along both sides of Highway 1 north of Santa Cruz.

The Gray Whale Ranch has been at the center of controversy since logging of some of the land was proposed several years ago. Opponents of logging the site as well as bicyclists wishing to maintain rights of way across the meadows and forests of the ranch have argued against development of the land.

In the document sent to county planners,

Yanke and local representative John Steinbacher of Capitola say the 135 homes would be built on 291 acres in the central portion of the ranch. The dwellings would go up on Gray Whale Ranch meadows and, according to the document, will be located to maintain "the ranch's and the individual meadows' integrity and rural character."

The proposal calls for dedication of more than 700 acres to public agencies or private, non-profit groups for use as permanent open space. Another 621 acres would be kept in the hands of a homeowners' association but would be dedicated as open space as well.

Some of the public open space would be

used to link the University of California, Santa Cruz campus with the Wilder Ranch — allowing uses such as hiking and bicycling through the forests between the mountains and the sea.

Another 546 acres, said to contain valuable stands of redwood and Douglas fir, would be donated to a charitable trust or some other public or non-profit agency "that would be capable and willing to take over management of this portion of the ranch.

"This entity," according to the proposal, "will own and manage the timber preserve lands and will be charged with investing the receipts gained from the sus-

tainable harvest of the timber in activities intended to benefit the entire Santa Cruz community."

Yet another 159 acres would be set aside as a biological preserve.

The county supervisor who represents the North Coast and Bonny Doon areas said Monday he had already been contacted by environmentalists worried about the plan to build on the Gray Whale Ranch.

"This proposal," said Supervisor Gary Patton, "flies in the face of the county's interest in protecting the North Coast. It is very difficult to suspect that this plan would ever gain approval as proposed."