

Park bonds' defeat renews fight over coastal ranches

BY PAUL ROGERS
Mercury News Staff Writer

Two huge coastal ranches north of Santa Cruz that are prized by environmentalists will remain at the center of development disputes — as they have for the past 20 years — with the failure of Proposition 180.

Rejected by voters Tuesday, the act, known as the California Parks and Wildlife Initiative, or CalPAW, would have raised \$2 billion for parks through the sale of state bonds. It failed 57 percent to 43 percent.

Included in Proposition 180 was \$12.5 million toward purchase of Gray Whale Ranch, a 2,319-acre property adjacent to Wilder Ranch State Park, and the Coast Dairies & Land Ranch, a 7,500-acre parcel that includes five miles of ocean frontage between Wilder Ranch and Scott Creek along Highway 1.

"It's a missed opportunity," said Santa Cruz County Supervisor Gary Patton.

Patton is president of the Planning and Conservation League, a Sacramento group that wrote Proposition 180. He praised Santa Cruz County voters, who came out in favor of the measure 54 percent to 46 percent.

Only five of California's 58

counties joined Santa Cruz in support, however: San Francisco, Los Angeles, Marin, San Mateo and Alameda.

A new timber harvest plan — the third this year — will be submitted for Gray Whale Ranch, said attorney Steve Worthley of Fresno, who represents owner Ron Yanke of Boise, Idaho.

Environmentalists said they will continue to fight logging on the ranch and plans to build 73 homes while they look for other ways to raise the estimated \$10 million needed to buy it as a park.

"It certainly would have made things easier all around if it passed," said Celia Scott of Save the Gray Whale Parklands. "But we have no plans to give up."

Coast Dairies & Land Ranch is now for sale at \$21 million, said Bob Bosso, a Santa Cruz attorney who represents the heirs of two Swiss families who have owned the land since 1902.

Unable to build golf courses or housing developments because of Santa Cruz County's strict slow-growth rules, the landowners gave \$15,000 to supporters of Proposition 180.

"We're disappointed," Bosso said. "But the alternative now is that we find somebody other than the public to buy it."