

# Anchovies make move on harbor

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SANTA CRUZ — The anchovies are no longer coming. They have arrived.

The Small Craft Harbor experienced a small anchovy kill Monday when a fish net especially designed to prevent a massive kill briefly broke from the extreme pressure of tons of fish pressing against it. This was the first time the net was used in an effort to avert an expensive and smelly anchovy kill.

Port District Director Brian Foss said the net was repaired within 10 minutes of the break and the acre of fish in the harbor mouth retreated. But as of 9 a.m. today, the fish were back and harbor crews are keeping a vigilant eye on the anchovies and on the net.

"The anchovies are still very

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much in evidence outside of the harbor," Foss said this morning. "They are not against the net but are very close."

In the past, anchovies by the millions have charged into the harbor, where they deplete the oxygen supply and die. The massive anchovy kill sends up a stench, and the dead fish damage the hulls of boats in the harbor.

Harbor crews hoisted the net about noon Monday when schools of anchovies were spotted near the harbor mouth. About 50 boats were delayed through the day as they waited for crews to ensure the fish were a safe distance away before lowering the net and allowing passage.

Although boats were only delayed Monday, Foss said if the circum-

Please see back of section

## Anchovies

Continued from Page A1

stances look exactly right for a massive anchovy kill, the harbor may be forced to warn boaters that if they leave the harbor, they may be unable to return.

"It may come to that but we don't anticipate it will happen," Foss said.

The anchovies' timing probably could not be worse. This weekend is the annual Windjammer race from San Francisco to the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf with at least 100 boats participating, many of which will end up in the harbor.

Santa Cruz Yacht Club Commodore Terry Drew said it is hoped the harbor will be open by late Friday night, but if not, the boats will anchor outside and the club will provide shoreboat service.

The race, which starts 2 p.m. Friday off the St. Francis Yacht Club, will find the bigger boats finishing around midnight. The finish line is between a mark in line with the mile buoy and the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf.

Before the opening of the harbor the yachts, anchored off the wharf and the club provided shoreboat service.

The race is sponsored by the San Francisco Windjammers and hosted by the local yacht club.

Foss said the small kill occurred when fish got through the net, which broke where it was connected to the pilings at one side of the harbor. Other fish were smothered against the net from the force of the anchovies behind them.

"A few got through the net after it broke, but the mass of them retreated," Foss said. "We don't know exactly why."

He said he also doesn't know why the fish are attempting to invade the harbor this late in the year. Generally, the fish move in during early August.

At present, thousands of tons of the anchovies are off the shore from Manresa State Beach to Santa Cruz. The numbers of fish near the harbor change by the hour.

Foss said he had hoped to test the custom-made net, which was installed about a month ago. The \$7,000 net is made with miniature mesh to keep fish from getting their gills snagged in it.

Although the net did break and will have to be redesigned to prevent another such problem, Foss said, so far it appears to be doing the job.

"I'd say that the net has had some success," Foss said. "But that it has some obvious weak points in its structure and those will have to be shored up."