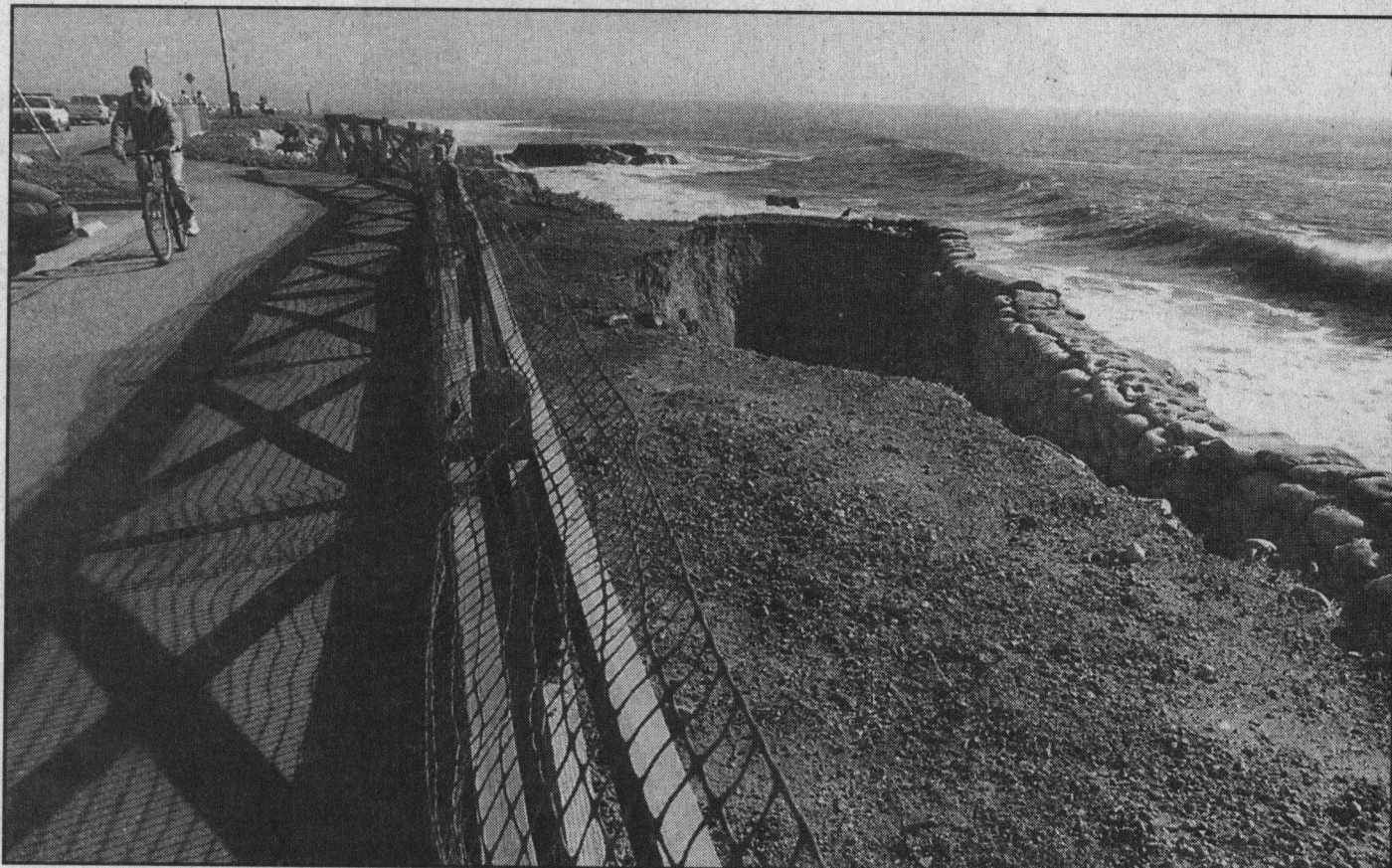


# Cave collapse



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

City officials say that fixing this cliffside cave-in along West Cliff Drive will cost around \$400,000; at the moment, the Federal Highway Administration is balking at funding the repair.

## City ponders how to fund new West Cliff woes

*Beach erosion*  
By ANNA MARIA BASQUEZ  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — There likely will be one less parking lot along West Cliff Drive soon, as city officials figure out the best way to deal with a collapsed, cliffside cave.

Just as Public Works was putting the finishing touches on projects along West Cliff Drive, putting a major disaster year behind them, a cave beneath the street between Woodrow Avenue and Columbia Street collapsed. The incident occurred in October, leaving the city with an estimated \$400,000 repair bill and a 30-foot-long gash along the cliffs. A roughly 10-car parking lot fronts the

ocean at the spot.

"We're probably going to lose some of this, but there's nothing we can do," said Tom Sharp of Public Works.

**'We're probably going to lose some of this, but there's nothing we can do.'**

**— Tom Sharp,  
Santa Cruz Public Works**

While the Federal Highway Administration has funded other retaining wall and rock projects along the drive, it denied an initial request for disaster funds to fix this problem, Sharp said.

The city just finished up a \$75,000 retaining wall project immediately adjacent to the new trouble spot. Public Works used federal funds to stabilize the cliff with large rocks. The problem at the cave was unknown when the neighboring repairs were done, according to

Sharp.

Sharp said he will file an appeal next week hoping to convince the Highway Administration the cave-in was the result of El Niño-powered storms.

"We always thought this location was a troublesome area," Sharp said. "The roof of this cave we didn't know about, and we didn't know about the magnitude of distress."

Sharp said the parking lot at the spot will likely be removed and the bike path directed over it; if the lot is saved, the parking spots will be made parallel to the road, instead of the current perpendicular layout, he said.

Repair could begin by early 1999, pending funding.

The city, meanwhile, recently started a new cliffside stabilization project on West Cliff near Columbia. That should be done by mid-December.