

# Cliff property owners hatch plan

**Kamala Kelkar, San Francisco Examiner, 6-24-10**

PACIFICA — If Pacifica property owners whose buildings are close to dropping off a 60-foot cliff pay an annual fee or more property taxes for a communal fund, it could save them from drowning in financial red ink.

About 10 building owners affected by the disappearing cliff near Esplanade Drive are interested in forming a Geological Hazard Abatement District, which would allow them to pool their money to mitigate erosion hazards that make the cliff a continuing danger. Two of the properties, 310 and 320 Esplanade Drive, evacuated the premises in April due to deterioration.

The property owners would draw district boundary lines that also consider surrounding at-risk areas such as open spaces or roads, have a certified engineering geologist approve it and write a plan of feasible and necessary action.

Then, 10 percent of property owners within the district would have to sign a petition and send it to the Pacifica City Council. If approved, an appointed board of directors would propose a price tag for property owners to pay into the district specifically for mitigation purposes.

That would have to pass with a majority vote of property owners within the district.

Establishing a communal fund is one way to secure funds, since property owners were warned by the city attorney and Pacifica's chief building official, Doug Rider, that they needed to come up with a plan or decide to demolish their buildings.

Six to 12 tons of boulders were placed at the foot of the bluff to stop the impact of waves hitting the cliff during the winter after up to 30 feet of cliff broke away, but the perfectly vertical bluff will naturally continue to erode.

"The boulders absorb the energy of the waves," Rider said. "Now there is a natural angle of repose the face of the bluff will try to achieve naturally."

The property owner at 320 Esplanade Drive had to evacuate the apartment complex in April even after the boulders were set, and recently applied for the demolition of the back porch since it is no longer stable, Rider said.

None of the vulnerable property owners have expressed interest in demolishing their premises. Now, they must decide whether forming the district is their saving grace.

"The question in the case of the cliffs at Pacifica is whether there is an engineering solution to the problem, and we are not in a position to answer that," California Geological Survey spokesman Don Drysdale said.