

Boulder Creek Pollution Crackdown In Boulder Creek

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By BILL NEUBAUER

A crackdown on faulty sanitation systems serving five business buildings in Boulder Creek was made Wednesday by the county Health Department.

The buildings are located in a former swamp area along the western side of the town's main business block on Central Avenue between Forest Street and Big Basin Road.

Given until Jan. 3 to "correct the health hazard and nuisance condition" were owners of IOOF Hall, the former Boulder Bar, Carl Conelly's Real Estate, the Gingerbread Boy Restaurant and DuFrane's Realty.

"This deadline can be extended slightly, perhaps, if strong evidence is given that

corrective measures are in progress," said Environmental Health Officer Ray Talley this morning.

"But it should be stressed that sewage from this area has been proven conclusively to be polluting San Lorenzo River and that this must be stopped. Deadline extensions definitely will not be granted just because they are requested."

Talley said that the state Regional Water Quality Control Board is seriously concerned about the river pollution, which dye tests show is flowing from under the business buildings into old storm drains and then into the river at a point below the Forest Street, Lomond Street, Railroad Avenue intersection.

The property owners were put on notice by the health department through certified letters several received Wednesday.

Al Stafford, owner of the Gingerbread Boy Restaurant, told The Sentinel Wednesday afternoon:

"We are all being told to convert our septic tanks into a watertight haul-away system. If this is what I must do, I'll have to close the restaurant. There's no way I could make out, because the haul-away provision means I would have heavy expenses pumping out the tank several times a month."

Carl Conelly, owner of the real estate building bearing his name, said after receiving his letter: "I'll just have to shut off

the water and close my restroom. It would cost me \$50 or \$60 a month, perhaps, to put in a new system and have the sewage hauled away."

Sympathy for the plight of the building owners was expressed this morning by H. J. Schmidt, county sanitarian for San Lorenzo Valley. "It will certainly cost them money," he conceded.

Schmidt pointed out, however, that he has made exhaustive tests of the area since last May, when sanitation problems in the area were spot-lighted by a public feud among building owners over whose sewage was flowing under whose buildings.

Tests in summer, Schmidt said, revealed sewage under

some buildings even though the area water table was low. But tests made Nov. 30, some time after the first rains, showed that in some places the water table was but four inches below ground level, and sewage was present, too.

"What this means," Schmidt said, "is that water in the area at some test holes was at the level of the septic tanks or above them."

Sewage is again running into the river, recent dye tests show.

Schmidt's check included getting water consumption figures on the buildings throughout 1971. Throughout most of the year, heaviest consumption was by the restaurant, the bar and the IOOF Hall.

The area's basic problem, Schmidt said, is caused by a subsurface of hardpan that prevents drainage. The hardpan created a swamp long before Boulder Creek was founded. This swamp was finally drained in 1892 by the town's first fire department, Boulder Creek Hose C. No. 1. But the same storm drains installed by these men to dry up the swamp now carry sewage to the river.

Other buildings in the area already have haul-away sanitation systems, which explains why they are not involved in the crackdown, Talley said. These include the Bluebird Bakery building and the newer buildings housing The Encounter and the Swingin' Redwoods.