

# *Water Supply* Fish dying as Soquel Creek goes dry *8/19/92*

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SOQUEL — Despite walking extensive portions of Soquel Creek, state Fish and Game wardens have not been able to identify why the creek is drying up and killing fish, the agency's Dennis Baldwin said Tuesday.

"We didn't find anything where we could say, 'Aha — this is the cause,'" Baldwin said. "Nothing leaped out at us."

In the absence of a specific cause, Baldwin said, several factors are probably responsible.

The pumping of water from the creek, less runoff because of the drought and

increasingly dense stands of trees all contribute to stopping the water flow, Baldwin said.

The water has disappeared from a three-quarter mile stretch of the creek beginning about a quarter-mile up from the Soquel Drive bridge, and continuing down about the same distance past the Highway 1 bridge.

Baldwin said that in the afternoon, water starts to flow, which is an indication that trees may play a significant role, since they use more water in the heat of the day and the roots draw less as it cools in the afternoon.

A check of pumps drawing water from the creek showed they were pumping wa-

ter, but there weren't any drawing extraordinary amounts, Baldwin said.

So far, thousands of fish have died from the lack of water, said Matt McCaslin of the Monterey Bay Salmon and Trout Project.

McCaslin said that for every dead fish found, at least 30 dead fish are not found. Baby steelhead and salmon are often victims of the dry-up and are hard to replace because they are genetically "wild," he said.

The fish can be re-stocked for about 50 cents each, minimum, McCaslin said, but fish from fish farms are genetically weaker.

"You can't put a price tag on wild fish," McCaslin said.