

# Desalting Plant Eyed For SC Area

*Designation*

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The possibility of Santa Cruz being selected as the area for a prototype desalting plant — a plant that would require a power-generating source such as the PG&E nuclear power plant being considered near Davenport — was explained Monday by city Water Director Wes Webber to members of the water commission.

Webber said the California Department of Water Resources and federal Office of Saline Water have a mutual interest in advancing a large - capacity desalting plant on the California coast that could produce up to 50,000 acre-feet of water a year.

Webber is expected to present the idea to the city council at its session tonight and ask that Santa Cruz be considered for further study on the matter.

Webber said the desalting plant would require heat and power and, therefore "the nuclear power plant proposed by the Pacific Gas and Electric Co. at Davenport would be a natural, as it is felt by authorities in the field of desalting that a very desirable arrangement for a plant is in conjunction with a nuclear power plant."

The water master plan for Northern Santa Cruz County shows the area will need an additional 20,000 acre-feet of water a year by 1980. Webber said if a 50,000 acre-feet a year desalting plant were built in the area "a review of the County Water Master Plan would be required. Certain reservoir projects could be eliminated, notably the Aptos site which would remove a controversy from the county."

Webber added that much

more study of cost and operation would be required before the city could approve such a desalting plant, but noted a tight time schedule is set for the operation.

State and federal authorities would like to make a tentative decision on plant location by Nov. 1. The following 10 months would be used for further evaluation, including discussion of the program with an electric utility and local persons on future water demands in the area.

Said Webber, "The state hopes to arrive at a memorandum of understanding so they can submit their report to the state legislature and Congress by Jan. 1, 1972,"

Construction would then begin by mid-1974 and the plant would be in operation by 1977.

However, Webber said no decisions have been made yet.

He said if it were to be located here, it would have to be determined how the desalting plant would integrate with the present system and how it would fit the water master plan.

He added that main competition for the desalting plant "is apparently Southern California and the nuclear power plant being constructed by PG&E at Diablo Canyon in San Luis Obispo County.

"It is desired to construct the plant on the ocean instead of on a bay, which would make the site at Davenport acceptable to the Office of Saline Water," Webber said.

Cost of the plant is estimated at \$50 million. "The capital cost would be written off and then presumably turned over to local interests for operation," Webber said.