

# How Watsonville can avoid expensive sewage project

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A costly upgrade of the city's current sewage treatment facility could be avoided if Watsonville city officials secure funding to extend the ocean outfall line which discharges the city's treated sewage. That's what an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) spokeswoman said today.

Although final approval of federal and state aid for the \$10 million project has not been made, city officials are confident the money will be there for them when such funds are allocated by the government later this year.

The EPA last month tentatively rejected the city's first request for an exemption from federal water quality laws which require Watsonville to upgrade its current sewage treatment facility to a "secondary level."

The facility's current treatment level is "primary," which does not provide as much treatment as does secondary.

City Manager John Radin, Assistant Public Works Director Dave Koch and food processing industry representative Frank Osmer met with EPA's Janet Hashimoto yesterday in San Francisco to discuss

the city's sewage treatment plans.

Should an upgrading to "secondary" treatment be mandated, it will be costly to the city and local industry, according to local officials.

Local industry has been concerned about the possible upgrade to "secondary" treatment because it would mean additional operating expenses, which Radin estimated could be as much as \$10,000 a month per plant.

Meanwhile, city officials have been working to avoid the costly upgrade. They applied for an exemption in 1979, but their application wasn't reviewed until recently.

Yesterday's meeting, which lasted an hour, was constructive, according to Koch. "We just discussed procedures for submitting a revised application," he said this morning.

City officials have until June 5, 1986, to present the EPA with a plan for improving discharge quality without the treatment upgrade.

City officials believe the outfall extension will satisfy the water-quality requirements. Hashimoto said this morning that a longer outfall "could possibly" improve the discharge quality, but testing will have to prove that.

"All the areas the EPA

thought we would have problems in would be taken care of by the outfall extension," Koch said.

Extending the current line, which stretches 4,000 feet from shore in about 45 feet of water, would further dilute the discharge. The city plans to extend the outfall line by 3,900 feet in length to a depth of 65 feet, Koch said.

"The extended outfall is going to increase their dilution which makes a lower concentration of discharge to the organisms in the ocean," Hashimoto said.

How well those organisms survive in that diluted discharge will determine the quality of the water, she said.

"One of the things they violate consistently are the ammonia, chlorine and toxicity discharge standards," Hashimoto said. Organisms die when sewage is not diluted sufficiently, she said.

Although city officials believe the extended outfall will solve their problems, the Public Works Department still must come up with a detailed application for EPA which proves that it will work.

The 1979 application cost about \$94,000 to prepare, but much of the information is out of date. New tests and treatment facility statistics must be recorded for the new application.

However, some information from the old application can still be used. For that reason, the new application will cost less than the original, Koch said.

"It'll be between \$30,000 and \$50,000, but we may be able to cut that down a little," he said.

Koch wasn't sure how long the new application would take to prepare. "We'd like to get it done as soon as we can," he said.