

# New report questions Midcounty water shortage

A U.S. Geologic Survey report on ground water levels in the Soquel Creek County Water District says what the county Well Drillers Assn. wants to hear — that the salt water intrusion problems the district has are not caused by an overdraft of the underground basin.

"This report doesn't suggest a basin overdraft," said Dick Hendry, attorney for the well drillers. He said the report, which includes a contour map of groundwater flows, suggests that "Soquel Creek is pumping very hard in areas where we can't get enough recharge."

Hendry noted that in the northern part of the district (away from the coast), where there's not much well drilling, groundwater levels haven't declined much over the years.

The USGS report, prepared by R.M. Bloyd, was delivered to water district directors Monday night. They will discuss it at their June 15 meeting.

The report said ground-water pumping "has

caused groundwater levels to decline below sea level in the Capitola area, in the area just west and northwest of Aptos, and in isolated areas southwest of Rio Del Mar." (A point southwest of Rio del Mar would appear to be on the floor of the Pacific ocean, but the report doesn't explain further.)

A previous USGS report suggested that the salt water intrusion problem was caused by a generally low groundwater level. It was that report (along with some other information) that led to a water connection ban in the district.

Hendry said the district could help alleviate its problems by having more small wells away from the coastal area.

At Monday's meeting, there was an indication that district directors, who have previously relied on USGS reports, want to examine contradicting information that has been advanced by the well drillers and some private citizens.

At the suggestion of

director Daniel Kriege, the board agreed to look into the possibility of hiring a consulting firm to review all the information being submitted and act as a sort of judge.

"They'd be a disinterested third party," said Kriege of the firm, Luhdorff and Scalmanini of Davis. The idea of hiring the firm (which directors will discuss further at their

next meeting) came up when the board agreed to hire the consultants to look into the feasibility of a well site in the Seascape area. If that site is deemed viable, it could serve a development proposed by Gary Britton.

The consultants would review information about the district's water situation "from anybody that wanted to give it to them," Kriege said.

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