

Valley Press 3-1-78

# Wilder Ranch answer to septic crisis?

By Bob Ligon

The state-owned Wilder Ranch along the coast north of Santa Cruz is being eyed as a possible short-range solution to the Valley's septic tank disposal crisis.

Septic tank effluent from the Valley would be disposed of in holding ponds on the property, at least until a permanent solution to the problem is found.

The proposal was discussed at a meeting last Thursday night of county and state officials, septic tank servicers, and private citizens.

The session was called to "brainstorm" ways of solving the problem, caused by Santa Cruz not being able to accept Valley septic tank effluent at its disposal plant.

This means Valley septic tank dealers must send trucks all the way to Watsonville to dispose of local sewage, thus sharply increasing tank pumping costs.

The higher cost is threatening to put several Boulder Creek downtown businesses out of business. Some 10 downtown businesses have sealed septic systems, meaning they must be pumped out frequently.

Some of the systems have to be pumped every two to five days.

Ray Talley, director of County Environmental Health, said a possible long-range solution to the problem discussed at the meeting would be to get the state to allow Santa Cruz to install a "metering" system at its treatment plant, thus enabling it to again accept Valley septic tank effluent.

Ken Jones, an official with the State Water Quality Control Board, and County Supervisors' Chairman Ed Borovatz sat in on the Thursday night meeting.

Another suggestion to solve the long-range problem was to have the Valley

sanitation study address itself to the immediate problem. The study has been ordered by the SLV County Water District, which also has jurisdiction over Valley sanitation problems.

State and federal grants have been provided for the study.

Meanwhile, County Supervisors this week were to consider a report by Talley recommending that the County Public Works Department's real estate division seek out a site that could be used to dispose of Valley sewage, at least temporarily.

Several Valley septic tank firm owners at the meeting suggested that the county buy and operate a disposal site.

Besides the Wilder Ranch property, the Locatelli Ranch property on Empire Grade road was advanced as a possible disposal location.

County officials questioned whether they could or should be involved in such a purchase. It would take a majority vote of County Supervisors, they noted.

## Street lights proposed

Three street lights are expected to be installed at the "dark" intersection of Graham Hill road and Conference drive in Felton.

County Supervisors this week were expected to authorize the installation upon the recommendation of the County Public Works Department.

"Due to the complexity and width of the intersection, three lights are necessary to provide adequate illumination there," said Don Porath, public works director.

The overall problem results from Santa Cruz not being able to meet state standards in treated sewage being disposed of at its ocean outfall line. The city is getting more "solids" than its plant can handle.

The city solved the problem temporarily by transporting "surplus" solids—along with Valley effluent—to a disposal site north of the city. During the recent heavy rains, however, the ponds overflowed, causing pollution of a nearby stream.

The state then ordered the city to close the disposal site. And the city in turn said it could no longer accept Valley sewage.

The city is working on plans to solve its overall problem. And those at the Thursday night's meeting appeared to agree that the state should be contacted to urge Santa Cruz to come up with a solution that would also take care of the Valley's sewage.

## Supes to get new chambers

County Supervisors soon will have a "new" 1,700 square foot meeting room.

Actually, it is the same room supervisors have been meeting in the past four months, since their old board chambers was converted to municipal courtrooms.

The new chambers, Conference Room 520, is located on the fifth floor of the county government center. Plans call for expanding the room moving "removable-type" walls and adding appropriate furnishings.

The architectural firm of Kaplan and McLaughlin will prepare plans for the work. No cost estimate has been prepared as yet.