

County Supervisors Call Watt Dishonest

County supervisors are accusing Secretary of Interior James Watt of being intentionally dishonest in a press release he recently issued on offshore oil drilling in Northern and Central California.

In a 3-2 vote Tuesday, with Supervisors Dan Forbus and E. Wayne Moore Jr. opposed, supervisors passed two resolutions — one announcing their disapproval with Watt's press release and the other giving support to a federal bill forbidding oil and gas leases off the California coast until Jan. 1, 2000.

Both resolutions were prepared by Supervisor Gary Patton.

The bill, H.R. 6365, recently was introduced by U.S. Rep. Leon Panetta, D-Monterey, and U.S. Rep. Don Clausen, R-Crescent City.

The press release, issued May 5, announced that the four Northern California Basins, including the Santa Cruz basin, will not be part of the area to be opened to oil and gas exploration in 1983.

Congress enacted legislation last year stopping Watt from spending any funds for oil and gas exploration in these four basins. Watt's statement, therefore, was in response to that action.

But what has the majority of supervisors angry is that although Watt announced that the ¾-million offshore acres in these four basins would be excluded, he also announced that nearly 9 million acres off the Northern and Central California coastlines would be offered for oil and gas exploration.

"Secretary of Interior James Watt, contrary to the plain meaning of the statement he issued, clearly intends to offer for leasing over 9 million acres off the Northern and Central California coasts, including areas in the four basins which he said were specifically excluded from the proposed Lease Sale No. 73 ..." supervisors stated in their resolution.

They claimed the press release "was intended to deceive local government officials, members of the press and media and citizens of the United States of America ..."

In the resolution, supervisors ask that President Reagan "take appropriate disciplinary action" against Watt "in connection with his dishonest and duplicitous statement ..."

Moore said he was against this resolu-

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Santa Cruz, Calif.—15

tion because he'd rather see the board take a softer approach. He called for the board to "take the molasses approach rather than vinegar."

Forbus also criticized the resolution, saying it was "absolutely unthinkable" to send something worded that way to federal officials.

The board majority also, at Patton's suggestion, authorized Patton to seek a statewide meeting of local government officials and citizens affected by Watt's proposal. The meeting will be held sometime before the November election.

The board Tuesday also took a position in favor of a proposed state bill that would allow local governments to levy assessments for fire and police protection facilities and equipment.

The resolution favoring this bill, Senate Bill 2001, was placed on the board's consent agenda by Patton and was unanimously approved. The bill has been introduced by Sen. Henry Mello, D-Watsonville.

Also on the consent agenda, supervisors unanimously took a position favoring proposed state legislation, Assembly Bill 2779, that would require landslide hazard protection policies in general plans and would establish a program to pinpoint landslide hazard zones.

This bill was placed on the agenda by Supervisor Joe Cucchiara.

Supervisors also unanimously took a position in favor of two bills, Senate Bill 1326 and Assembly Bill 2361, relating to the ability of local air pollution control districts to levy fees.

Patton, who placed the resolution favoring these bills on the consent agenda, stated their passage would "assist this county in maintaining an adequate air pollution program without the need to make substantially new and higher contributions from county general funds."