Board buys land for Glenwood dam

The much-discussed Glenwood dam and reservoir — keystone in the Soquel Creek County Water District's long-range plans for water development — came a giant step closer to reality Monday night.

After hearing a report from their appraiser, district directors authorized the purchase of 135 acres in the Enchanted Valley area on the west branch of Soquel Creek at a cost of $245,000. The land was described as being the "physical site" of the proposed dam and reservoir which is being considered to meet the future water needs of the central Santa Cruz County area.

The action came after years of planning, the annexation of the site into the district in 1972, and passage in 1974 of a $5 million bond issue which included funds for the purchase of the dam and reservoir site. The water planners still face a mountainous pile of red tape, involving such things as water rights and ecological considerations, which must be scaled before they can even begin to think about building the dam.

Board chairman Ken Izant said that, although the dam may never be built, "We are looking ahead. It would be wrong if we didn't go ahead (with the purchase.)"

"We were committed to it when we sold the bonds," said director Larry Bargetto.

District Manager Robert Johnson told the directors that money for the purchase had been budgeted, and that the purchase price includes about $56,000 worth of marketable timber. The price for the land — which is undeveloped — is about $1,400 an acre.

The district has applied to the state for water rights along the creek, and is currently negotiating with the state Department of Fish and Game over conditions to be met to preserve fish and wildlife should the dam be built.

Johnson told the directors that after his most recent meeting with DFG, "it looks like it is still a viable project. We aren't all that far apart."

Cost of the dam in today's dollars is put in the neighborhood of $20 million. How much it will cost if built in another 10-15 years, no one knows.