

# County Supervisors Scrap Septic Inspection Program

The countywide septic tank inspection program has been scrapped by the county Board of Supervisors.

Supervisors Tuesday decided to drop the program and replace it with an educational program designed to inform property owners about the maintenance of septic systems and about a do-it-yourself inspection method.

Only Fifth (San Lorenzo Valley-Scotts Valley) District Supervisor Joe Cucchiara voted against dropping the program, saying that the number of failing septic systems discovered over the two years of the program prove it's beneficial.

While he supported the new educational approach, Third (Seaside) District Supervisor Gary Patton said he also was against dropping the inspection program.

"I personally think the program has been a success," Patton said, "and I think we should be continuing the program, rather than sending people pamphlets, which is fine, but not enough."

County Environmental Health Director Ray Talley disagreed that the program has been a success, stating, "site inspections have not revealed a large number of failures and are not an efficient means to detect sewage disposal system failures."

In 1980-81, when the inspection was done within 100 feet of the San Lorenzo River and its tributaries, 22 or 1.3 percent of the systems inspected were found to be fail-

ing.

Another 50 or 3 percent in 1980-81 were found to be illegal greywater systems in which the wastewater wasn't going underground.

This year, the program was expanded to include areas throughout the county with high groundwater, poor soil conditions of septic tank system problems and 28 or 2.3 percent of the septic systems inspected were found to be failing.

Another 44 or 3.5 percent this year were illegal greywater systems.

Cucchiara called the discovery of 28 failures this year "extremely significant" and asked why the county hadn't ordered the abatement of any of these failing systems.

Talley responded by explaining that the county only orders abatement when a septic system is a nuisance or public health hazard. In the cases under the inspection program, he said, the systems just need to be pumped.

The county's action may not mean to the end to septic tank inspections, however. Two years ago, the state Legislature passed a bill allowing the San Lorenzo Valley Water District to inspect septic systems.

While the Water District doesn't yet have an inspection program, it conceivably could take over the county's program in the San Lorenzo Valley.

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