

Foggier-than-usual summer hurting business

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The fog that's been plaguing our region is causing big problems for area businessmen and inconvenience for other residents and visitors.

The morning fog has been abnormally heavy during the last last few weeks, especially in the coastal areas of Santa Cruz and Monterey counties.

Stores and restaurants near the beach have felt its effects the most, with many store owners and managers reporting business down.

"Nobody is coming to the beach. Business is horrible — it's the worst I've ever seen and I've lived here 30 years," said Mike Wilson, the owner of El Patio Grocery in La Selva Beach.

The weather's been keeping people at home, Wilson said,

although he still gets numerous phone calls from people asking if the fog has lifted.

"In the last couple of weeks, we've only seen the sun for about 10 minutes in the late afternoon," he said.

Much the same report came from Toni Telton, manager of O'Neill's Surf Shop in Capitola.

"We get the same, shallow, constant, complaint from people about not being able to get a suntan," she said, adding she also gets numerous phone calls for weather conditions.

The fog has put a damper on business, she said, "but the surfing has been all right."

Eric Gumdlach, of the Bandstand Restaurant on the Capitola Esplande, said business at the restaurant hasn't been hurt as badly as in neighboring restaurants that

feature outside eating areas.

However, the weather has put people in a glum mood, he said, adding, "When it's sunny, people are just more happy, a better atmosphere."

The fog has also been a hindrance to gardeners, according to Rick Bergman, deputy agriculture commissioner for Santa Cruz County.

"I don't think it has affected any commercial operations, but it has caused some problems for the home gardener," he said.

People trying to grow tomatoes, corn, or even watermelons in the back yard will have to wait longer for them to ripen, he said. Heat and sunlight are needed in large doses by such produce, he explained.

Meanwhile, at the Watsonville Municipal Airport, Vern Ackerman, airport manager, said the fog has inconven-

ienced pilots.

Ackerman said instrument assistance in landings and flashing lights are used to offset the low visibility.

"Last year we had a fog-free summer and people got used to that," he said. "July and August are usually our worst two months, then the warm weather kicks in in September."

The fog has also dissuaded children from taking part in the city Recreation Department's summer swim program at Watsonville High School.

Jack Smith, director of the program, said that at the beginning of the summer 300 to 350 children were taking part. Only about 100 kids turn out now, he said, with most showing up in the afternoon.

"They also spend more time in the warm water of the showers afterwards," he said.