

R.R. - Water Crisis

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Voluntary Water-Use Rules May Be In SC's Future

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Voluntary water-use restrictions may be in the near future of City of Santa Cruz Water Department customers if there are no substantial rains by Jan. 1.

A worried city water commission today ordered Water Director Morris Allen to draw up a plan for a voluntary conservation program and to present it Jan. 17.

And Allen warned that if the hard drought prevails in this area all system customers next summer may face mandatory water-use regulations "twice as severe as they were last summer."

But a call by Commissioner Gretchen Goldstein for immediate reconstitution of the city's emergency water-use ordinance of last summer was resisted by Allen, who said he felt that it would be "inappropriate" at this time.

Goldstein argued it would be "absurd to wait until we are drawing on our reserves to reconstitute the ordinance."

Commissioner Mel Calender also expressed concern that the drought may put the city into an emergency situation unless some type of use controls are made effective now. But he did not push for reconstitution of the ordinance.

Allen said the city is not drawing upon the Loch Lomond reservoir at this time. Rather, he said, the city is getting from 8 to 9 million gallons daily from the running coastal streams and about 500,000 gallons daily from a Live Oak well. Up to about 12 million gallons per day could be taken from these sources if need be.

Allen explained that Loch Lomond is the city's only storage reservoir and that there would be no way to put into this the water that could be developed from the coastal streams, and on a direct question from Goldstein he stated that unused runoff from the streams goes into the sea.

But if the city had to draw upon Loch Lomond, Allen said, a voluntary water-use program should be instituted promptly.

Allen said the reservoir has some 890 million gallons, compared with a normal of about 1.6 billion at this time of year. Reservoir capacity is about 2.4 billion gallons.

City watershed rainfall has been about 5.08 inches to date this rain season, or only 36 per cent of normal.

"It is not a good picture at all," Allen told the commissioners. "It is looking like a carbon copy of last season, only worse."

But with consumption below the production capacity of the running sources being drawn on, Allen said he did not think the ordinance should be reconstituted now. In this connection he said:

"Our stream sources are much more than adequate now,

with a comfortable margin of production for peak days of water use. People do have the right to water, not to waste it, but they do have the right to use it efficiently."

Commissioner Arthur Hackwood castigated Goldstein for statements to the press (a weekly newspaper) on the water situation, saying: "I don't think it was appropriate to make the remarks without all facts being known."

Goldstein questioned that as a water commissioner she does not have freedom of speech.

But Hackwood replied: "The statements were more political than factual."

Hackwood bore down several times during the meeting on the fact that water not taken for use from the streams runs into the sea. He backed development of a voluntary conservation plan at this time.