

Fluoridation plan should move ahead

WATSONVILLE:

Opponents of fluoridated water should stop their fight. And a rejected plan in Santa Cruz should be reconsidered.

Fluoridation

112801

Here's a message to opponents of fluoridated water in Watsonville: Drop your challenge to the plan. Please.

The Watsonville City Council has taken the issue of fluoride in the water through all necessary stages of public hearings and has decided to go ahead with putting it into the water supply.

There are plenty of good reasons to fluoridate, which is why most communities across America have done so. One community that hasn't is Santa Cruz, which let its citizens down by listening to a vocal minority that has used questionable science to argue against fluoride.

Our view — one the Watsonville City Council agrees with — is that adding fluoride to the water can protect lower-income families' children from tooth decay and the complications that arise from it.

Children from middle- and high-income families aren't in as serious a need, because statistically, most of them are visiting dentists and receiving in-office anti-cavity treatments of fluoride.

Fluoridated drinking water has been controversial for a half-century, with critics protesting the idea of the government adding anything to the drinking water in general and adding fluoride in particular. As sincere as these protesters are, we just don't agree that there's any plot on the general public, nor do we agree that adding fluoride is a danger.

It's hard to imagine any substance that has been studied more than fluoride. And the battle has raged in communities across the country, with the majority of office-holders giving the substance the go-ahead.

The payoff has been dramatic, with tooth decay problems lessening. We're moved by the words of one Watsonville pediatrician, Michelle Simon, who says: "I see kids on a daily basis who are suffering enormous pain from untreated dental decay. It's outrageous to know there's a safe, effective means to reduce this problem — fluoridation — but our kids aren't benefiting from it."

The Dientes! Community Dental Clinic in Watsonville has reported that 75 percent of the more than 10,000 students in five Watsonville elementary schools have untreated dental decay.

Please, it's time to stop the fight. The council has voted, and the process should begin. The children who can afford it least are suffering the most. A group called the Watsonville Citizens for Safe Drinking Water says it will circulate a petition to fight fluoridation. The group is not acting in the public interest and should drop the fight.

In fact, we call on leaders in Santa Cruz to re-examine their refusal to fluoridate water at the north end of the county. The City Council here is failing its citizenry as well, and should reopen the debate.