

County growth well above state average

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State figures released Thursday show that Santa Cruz County's population grew by 3.7 percent in 1985, well above the state average.

The news that 214,300 people now live in the area was not welcomed by county supervisors who feel the growth is outstripping local government's ability to provide service.

Since the late 1980s, the supervisors have tried to slow growth through Measure J, a legal limit on building permits.

The state figures, representing growth in the unincorporated areas, as well as the cities, of the county, raise questions about the effectiveness of Measure J, as well as growth in the cities compared to growth in the unincorporated areas of the county.

The State Office of Population Research, which publishes the growth figures, will not release a breakdown of city and unincorporated growth rates until May 1.

"I think the perception is we're growing too fast," Board Chairman Gary Patton said.

Patton noted that the county's 3.7 percent growth rate, exceeding the state average of 2.2 percent for 1985, was almost as high as the county's rate of growth before Measure J was passed.

Aptos-Capitola Supervisor Robley Levy said the figures point to the need to lower the county's growth limit beyond the current 1.5 percent.