

# Midcounty water board ready to refute claims of overdraft

Although it is the third largest water producer in Santa Cruz County and the major user of the Purisima groundwater formation, the Soquel Creek County Water District has never been formally invited to a state hearing Thursday on groundwater overdrafts in Santa Cruz County.

Nevertheless, the district directors voted Monday night to spend up to \$1,000 for their consultant, Joseph Scalmanini, to prepare a report on the Midcounty's water situation, including the lack of any evidence that an overdraft exists and the steps the district is taking to study the underground aquifer and manage its water resources.

The state Department of Water Resources will hold a public hearing at Watsonville City Hall, Thursday at 7:30 p.m. to reexamine the evidence for saying that the Pajaro Valley, as well as the remainder of Santa Cruz County, is in a "critical groundwater overdraft" situation.

The county is listed as one of the critical overdraft areas in the text of Prop. 13 — the Water Resources and Conservation Initiative — on the November ballot.

"If Prop. 13 passes," Scalmanini told the water district directors Monday night, "the basin will have to have a groundwater management plan approved by the Department of Water Resources.

"But there is no evidence of overdraft in the district," Scalmanini added.

A 1979 draft report of the state report showed only the Pajaro Valley in the "critical groundwater overdraft" designation, but all of Santa Cruz County, with the exception of the area around Ano Nuevo Island, ended up with the overdraft designation because of letters written by County Supervisor Gary Patton and the Santa Cruz City Water Commission.

Patton tried at the time to get the remainder of the then-conservatively dominated Board of Supervisors to support his letter, but failed. The letter, nevertheless, remained in the state files and was cited as the reason for inclusion of all of Santa Cruz County in the critical overdraft area.

The water directors also awarded a \$13,620 contract to Scalmanini to design and oversee

the construction of two wells in the Seascape and La Selva Beach area.

The new Aptos well will replace an old, deteriorating well at the end of Cliff Drive, and will probably be drilled into the Aromas Red Sands formation in the Bonita Drive area.

By tapping the Aromas Red Sands instead of the Purisima formation, the district can avoid construction of a costly iron and manganese removal system.

The new La Selva Beach well will also be drilled into the Aromas Red Sands and will replace two old wells, one already shut down and the other failing, in the area.

Scalmanini also reported that the final coastal monitoring well is being drilled at the mouth of Aptos Creek this week. The district plans to drill two test wells inland — one off Cherryvale Drive, and the second at the Central County Water District corporation yard. The two wells were recommended by Scalmanini to see if the same geological formations present at the coast extend inland to the area near the Zayante fault.