

# Pipeline debated

## Dave McCabe, Dick Peixoto, Hank Shimpeler face off

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WATSONVILLE — A plan to pipe water into the Pajaro Valley was the subject of a heated debate at the VFW Hall in Watsonville Thursday, when proponents of the project squared off against members of a grassroots organization formed to fight the pipeline.

The debate was sponsored by the Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business (COLAB), an organization made up of business and community members who encourage public discussion of local quality of life issues and the business environment in the Monterey Bay area.

Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency General Manager Dave McCabe was the lone speaker defending the pipeline while grower Dick Peixoto and water activist Hank Shimpeler called for a 10-year moratorium on construction until alternative, less costly projects can be tried.

Both sides agreed on one thing — more water is being drawn from the basin that is being replaced through natural processes. How to correct the problem, however, is something neither side agrees on.

Peixoto, a member of the grassroots organization No Overpriced Pipeline Ever (NOPE), said there are alternatives to this massive project which the board has refused to consider, including storage and recovery of winter runoff from the Pajaro River and increased conservation efforts.

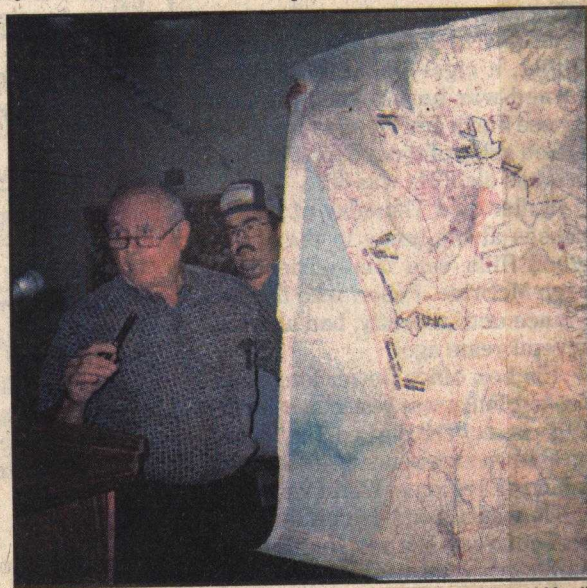
Shimpeler said the completed pipeline will cost \$134 million, which when spread over 20 years at 7 percent interest will grow to \$321 million. "Our problem is a matter of cost," Shimpeler said. "It's just not feasible for the Pajaro Valley to pay those kinds of numbers."

One alternative proposed by Shimpeler is the Bolsa Reservoir project. He estimated it would cost \$15 million to build a 100-foot high earthen dam which would provide an annual yield of 8,000 acre/feet of water per year. Shimpeler said those numbers are estimates and were not developed by engineers.

Shimpeler's cost estimate was challenged by Dalton Fisher of Watsonville who identified himself as an operating engineer who has helped build several dams. "There is more to building a dam than writing ideas on a napkin in a coffee shop," Fisher said. "To seal a dam of that size you have to lay down a foundation at least as deep as the dam is high. \$15 million may not even prepare the site, let alone build a dam. Your figures are misleading."

McCabe agreed, saying this and several other alternatives have already been looked at and for one reason or another, they are not sufficient.

McCabe said another problem is pressure from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), who are becoming increasingly aggressive in matters of salt water in-



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Hank Shimpeler pointing out location of proposed Bolsa Reservoir.

trusion and water distribution. He said they are threatening to withdraw \$5 million in funds earmarked for seawater intrusion projects if the valley does not come up with a workable plan soon.

McCabe distributed copies of a letter he had received that very day from the board stating, "If sufficient progress in the eyes of the SWRCB is not being made, the SWRCB reserves the right to reduce the \$5 million reserved for your agency."

Saying \$5 million is a very small percentage of \$134 million, Shimpeler characterized the potential loss of state funding as a minor consideration when talking about the total cost of the pipeline.

Peixoto said if the valley cannot solve its water problems in the next 10 years, then he would be willing to consider a pipeline. "The (PVUSD) is locking us into a project we can't back out of later," Peixoto said. "They have gotten out of control, it's time to put them back into their cages."