

# Bonita Drive Water Line Approved

A new 400-foot-long water main along Bonita Drive in Rio del Mar, estimated to cost some \$160,000, has been approved by the Soquel Creek County Water District board of directors.

Spurred by a 75-signature petition from RDM homeowners, the eight-inch replacement line could be put out to bid within a month. It is expected to help alleviate the fire protection problem for some 100 residences, according to Aptos Fire Chief Nick Baumgartner.

While Baumgartner was pleased with the prompt action of the water board, which adjusted its capital improvement program in order to make funds available for the project, he was quick to point out the line "won't be adequate fire protection" for the residences higher up on the ridge.

He explained that residents along Loma Prieta, Cuesta, Cresta Vista and Vista Del Mar still will be plagued by inadequate water from 2½-inch water mains, lack of booster pumps, insufficient number of hydrants and 400-foot elevations.

The addition of four fire hydrants on Bonita Drive, however, could aid residents living along the lower end of Encino Drive. At present, the closest fire hydrant to the area is at Clubhouse and Bonita, although a "sub-standard" hydrant is located on Freedom Boulevard near Bonita,

he added.

Two ridge area RDM homes were destroyed by fire last year. Both Baumgartner and Soquel Water Manager Bob Johnson have reiterated that a special water assessment district would be the only quick solution for the upper area.

Attempts by the RDM Improvement Association for more than a year to obtain 60 percent of the residents' signatures on petitions to form such a district failed.

Water directors replied promptly to requests from Bonita Drive residents who two weeks ago protested the replacement line should have been replaced last year under the district's 1976 master plan. Residents, led by Sharon Mathis, pointed to brush fire hazards, such as the adjacent Valencia Lagoon that is designated a reserve for the long-toed salamander, but is covered with dead brush.

While the new water line has been designed, specifications still need to be completed, according to Hank Dodds, assistant manager. Those are expected to be returned for final approval on March 2.