

Water Supply

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XATC

Conflicting Opinions On Water Level Map

A conflict of opinion has occurred as a result of the just-released "water level contour map" of the Soquel-Aptos area by the United States Geological Survey.

While no formal comments were made Monday night by the Soquel Creek County Water District board since it had just received the USGS report minutes before a meeting, Assistant District Manager Hank Dodds told The Sentinel later the map "doesn't appear to offer anything new and startling."

Local water biologist Laurence Frommhagen, who has been at odds with the district for some time over its much-publicized underground water overdraft, believed differently.

Frommhagen had to be gaveled down from speaking by board president Ken Izant at Monday's meeting because of his insistence toward speaking to the new report. Hoevere, he managed to mention the map "shows that you don't have an overdraft and there isn't a water shortage."

Frommhagen has maintained the district's coastal wells are causing the overdraft in that area by overpumping the basin.

When Frommhagen's charges were repeated Monday, Dodds replied that the district all along has admitted the coastal wells were the major users of water in the lower area of the district.

"In general, the new information says there is more water being withdrawn in the lower levels than the upper levels — information we have known," said Dodds. "There still definitely is an overdraft."

That "overdraft" was referred to as "significant groundwater level declines" by USGS. Compared to well water levels taken in the so-called Hickey report in April 1980, there are declines of about 40 feet in the pumping depression northeast of Capitola. Additionally, declines of more than 50 feet are cited northeast and east of Aptos, and between 15- and 20-foot declines north of Capitola.

While the report notes there were no attempts made to draw water level contours in the "high relief terrain" in the northern part of the area, it also projected that "groundwater levels in the northern

part of the area probably have not declined much over time."

It added that because there are few, if any, large production wells in the northern area, it is believed "relatively small amounts of groundwater are being pumped from the aquifers in this area."

In a letter to the board, Frommhagen maintained that because of that information "those northern lands contain an abundance of water...which could meet the long-term needs of the northern portion of Santa Cruz County."

Dodds pointed to the question of transmission lines in the district making use of that water.

A new finding in the USGS map, however, shows the general direction of groundwater movement from the northern ridges toward the adjacent canyons and then southward toward the ocean.

This is in contrast to the Hickey report that said the groundwater flow was parallel to the coastline.

"At least this is more favorable than less favorable since the water us flowing toward the general area of higher withdrawal," said Dodds.

Later in the meeting, the board did move toward hiring consulting engineers Luhdorff and Scalmanini of Davis to conduct an "over-all review" of the groundwater information.

Formal discussion by the district board of the new USGS map was scheduled for June 15. USGS District Chief Richard Bloyd will be in attendance.