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Water Director Scores USGS For Poor Report

Santa Cruz Water Director Morris Allen this morning sharply criticized the U.S. Geological Survey for having issued its now repudiated 1980 report that claimed a heavy overdraft of the Mid-County underground water supply.

The report was repudiated last week by John Brederhoeft, regional chief of the water resources division, in a letter to the Soquel Creek County Water District.

The letter said in part:

"The data presented in the report are not substantially sufficient for precipitous action. The reported safe yield of 4,400 acre feet is not the yield of the total basin."

The 1980 report of 4,400 acre feet available for domestic supply indicated a sharp decline in the water available in the Purisma Formation, for in a previous report it had been asserted there were some 7,500 acre feet available annually for domestic use.

Allen told the city Water Commission this morning: "It is shocking that the USGS would issue a report so poorly documented and barely verified and then stonewall for and then later be forced to admit the survey was inadequately, poorly done.

"It is a sad affair that a respected government agency would do such a thing. We paid for 30 percent of the costs of this survey and perhaps we should try to get our money back. We should not have to pay for a report that was apparently so grossly inadequate."

Allen noted that the report had led to a water meter connection moratorium in the Soquel district and that the city of Santa Cruz had undertaken the expense of changing its mode of operation of its wells in this area and of looking for alternative water sources.

But Allen said also there has been indication in the city wells there of a gradual decline in the water table, and he added, "We are certainly aware we will need other water sources in the very long term.