

City Shows Right, Need For Water In Soquel Creek

Water Supply
The city of Santa Cruz has made it clear it has just as much right to Soquel creek water—and just as much need—as anyone else.

"If we keep growing and we don't develop any storage facilities we probably will be faced with water rationing in the future," Water Superintendent Weston Webber declared.

And City Manager Robert Klein said it is his belief that if current engineering studies point to Soquel creek as the logical provider of future city-water supplies the city council and water commission will propose construction of dams regardless of who might oppose such a move.

The city handed the Santa Clara valley, which has filed claims on Soquel and neighboring creeks, and the Pajaro valley, which would like to corner Soquel water, a lesson in water strategy and tactics last Friday when it took a six-month option to buy 4300 acres in the heart of the Soquel watershed.

The option combined with two prior claims gives the city the upper hand in the sudden and dramatic Soquel creek situation. Whether the city decides to act on its option and eventually purchase the land will in all probability be dictated by final engineering reports on two Soquel sites, which form a combined project, and an unrelated site at Doyle gulch.

Klein and Webber took up the verbal cudgels in defense of Santa Cruz after Supervisor Francis Silliman, a Pajaro valley spokesman, said Santa Cruz city "doesn't need Soquel water."

"If Santa Cruz tries to take

over Soquel water it would run into a tremendous amount of resistance not only from city residents but from other sources, including me," Silliman said.

Silliman said he feels city residents would turn down a bond issue to finance dam construction and added that Santa Cruz "is over-bonded right now."

Santa Cruz taxpayers currently pay four cents yearly per \$100 of assessed valuation on three bond issues. One of them, the 1926 sewer bond, with its recently-reduced one-cent levy, will be paid off in full by the end of the present fiscal year.

"I'm not mad at anyone over there (in Santa Cruz)," Silliman continued. "I think Santa Cruz city is money-conscious and is trying to develop that water to sell. Santa Cruz doesn't need that water any more than anyone needs an extra leg," Silliman charged.

Klein said a Watsonville source asked him about Santa Cruz development of Soquel water sources Friday and that he replied with another question:

"What difference does it make who develops the water as long as the surplus water is sold in the county at a wholesale price?"

Silliman took a softer tack when asked about this possibility.

"That would be something to consider if the county water district thinks Santa Cruz is the proper authority to handle it," he said.

Silliman added it is his opinion that the question of who develops which water

(Continued On Page 3)

Water

(Continued from Page 1)

sources should be decided by the recently-enacted Santa Cruz county flood control and water conservation district after a complete study of all county water sources has been completed by the district.

Santa Cruz water commissioners have been outspoken in labeling the district a creature proposed by and for the Pajaro valley.

Klein said it was not in his power to set water policy, but he added—"it is my understanding that the city council and the water commission will sell any surplus water at any time" if the city develops a water storage program.

Water Superintendent Webber pointed out that at present the city has no dams anywhere and depends for its water supply strictly on stream flow from Laguna and Majors creeks and Liddell spring, all coastal sites northwest of the city, and the San Lorenzo river.

"We have no impounding storage," Webber said. "We depend strictly on stream flow. Our demands in the summertime are very nearly reaching the capacity of the streams."

"We are pumping 16 to 24 hours a day out of the San Lorenzo river. If we had a dry year, such as 1931, we would be rationing water. Who is to say when we'll have another such dry year?"

"In 1947 the (San Lorenzo river) pumps ran 24 hours around the clock during the summer, and we were taking all the water in the river. That's how close the situation was then."

"If we keep growing, and we don't develop any water storage facilities, we probably will be faced with water rationing."

Webber disclosed that in the year ending June 30, consumption jumped 100,000,000 gallons over the previous year's total of 1,523,000 gallons. And, he added, that the city water system serves not only the city but a broad area outside the city limits.

When Klein announced on Friday that the city had taken a six-month \$750 option to buy Soquel watershed property from the Monterey Bay Redwood company, he observed it was a good way to "protect" the \$25,000 investment the city is making in engineering study of future dam sites.