

# San Lorenzo River Quality Gets Low Mark From State

By PAUL BEATTY  
Sentinel Staff Writer

San Lorenzo River water quality degraded more during the 1970s than any other major river in the state, a newly released report from the state Water Resources Control Board states.

The only other river it compares to in having its quality worsened is the intermittent Santa Margarita River which is getting too many nutrients and agricultural re-use from nearby areas.

The San Lorenzo, which the report says went from fairly good quality river at the beginning of last decade to a middle-range medium quality river, is becoming the victim of urbanization, the report states.

"The San Lorenzo River suffers from urban development pressures. Poor septic tank and land grading practices create problems with bacteria, nutrients and sedimentation," according to the report, titled "Water Quality/Water Rights, 1978-80 Report."

While noting the river has been degraded as growth and urbanization occurred in San Lorenzo Valley, spokesmen at the Regional Water Quality Control Board in San Luis Obispo say that improvements to the river are coming about.

Chief Engineer Bert Van Voris said Santa Cruz County ordinances on erosion control, grading and river corridor protection are having a positive impact and

that local septic tank inspection programs have been helpful.

Van Voris also noted the San Lorenzo Valley Water District is working to get \$20 million to sewer the major septic tank problem areas.

Regional Executive Officer Ken Jones complained that every report on the river speaks of its animal waste pollution from septic systems "but where are these failing systems?" he queried.

He said his office has had inspectors in the area the past two summers, but that extensive failures that would directly pollute the river generally have not been found.

The state report, while pointing out degradation of the San Lorenzo, gives high marks to most of California's rivers.

"After nearly a decade of financing better sewage treatment, California shows steadily improving water quality.

"With few major exceptions, cities that once pumped raw or lightly treated sewage to surface waters now discharge, or will soon produce, high quality, reuseable effluent. Water grant program (money) is cleaning bacterial pollutants from state streams," the report contends.

It names the County Sanitation District's new sewer line from mid-county to Santa Cruz as an example of the improvements that have been made.