

# Watsonville Gets Sewage Plant Funding

The recent allocation of \$4 million in federal funds for the new Watsonville sewage treatment plant means that Watsonville area industry owners no longer are threatened with having to pay a huge bill for the treatment facility.

If the money hadn't been allocated before Nov. 15, a federal law would have made it mandatory for industrial users of the new treatment facility to finance 87.5 percent of the cost that otherwise would have come from state and federal funds.

Assemblyman Sam Farr, who worked with state Senator Henry Mello to get the funds allocated before the November deadline, called the state's decision to allocate the \$4 million "a breakthrough."

"I'm very excited about this breakthrough because we were all working like mad to get them under the wire before this November," Farr stated.

"I think the city of Watsonville should be

complimented for its diligence and I'm glad some of the effort we put through our office was successful," the assemblyman added.

"It was a race against the clock and a life and death situation for some of the canners in Watsonville. It meant the difference between some of them being able to stay in our community and employ the numbers they do. It meant the difference for some of them staying open or shutting down," Farr told The Sentinel.

Due to a change in federal law made in 1977, any industrial flow to a treatment plant will be ineligible for funding under the federal/state Clean Water Grant Program as of this Nov. 15.

Normally under this grant program, the federal government puts up 75 percent of the cost of a treatment facility and the state government and the local jurisdiction involved each put up 12.5 percent.

"We proposed a \$30 million treatment facility to be built," explained Christine Kahr, a consulting engineer for the city of Watson-

ville.

"The existing facility provides only primary treatment and we were going to an intermediate treatment to meet California Ocean Plan standards.

"Of that \$30 million, roughly half needs to be spent to accommodate industrial flow. Of that \$15 million, the industries were going to pay the local 12.5 percent by paying off a bond issue through annual charges," Kahr said.

"However, the change in federal law meant that the 87.5 percent from the state and federal governments wouldn't have been forthcoming and the industries would have had to pay this 87.5 percent cash up front the day construction on the plant started. This would have been almost impossible," Kahr explained.

But now that the first \$4 million portion of the \$30 million project has been allocated, Watsonville industrial owners are exempt from the Nov. 15 deadline for any other portion of the project, Kahr added.

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