

Water Pollution

AC Sentinel 8/24/70 p1

# A Year To Restore Soquel Creek Ecological Balance

More than a year may be required before the ecological balance is restored to the lower stretches of Soquel Creek where some 20,000 fish died Friday after ammonia was pumped into the stream.

Ron Long, fish and game warden, said he plans to confer today with the district attorney concerning possible charges

against the Soquel Meat and Frozen Foods Company, the firm which allegedly pumped ammonia into the creek while changing the meat plant's cooling system.

Lang said charges could be brought under Section 5650 of the Fish and Game Code, which "makes it unlawful to allow material deleterious to fish life to enter the waters of this state."

If convicted, the firm could face a maximum fine of \$500, Lang said.

Not only were fish destroyed, Lang said, but the ecological balance of the stream was disrupted.

He explained that a large number of insects — upon which the fish feed — also died in the incident.

Lang called the estimate of

20,000 dead fish "conservative," adding that the lower stretches of the streams are the "nursery area" for fish. "Thousands and thousands of juvenile fish, steelhead trout and silver salmon, were killed. This will have a great effect on the crop for this year," Lang said.

He added that Cabrillo College biologists are making a series of tests to determine the effects of the ammonia on the stream's algae.

Gil Paul, manager of the Soquel firm, was not available for comment today.

Lang asked citizens of Santa Cruz County to cooperate with authorities in preventing future recurrences of such incidents, including prompt notification. Lang may be reached through the county's communications system, phone 425-2355.