

## Cover Story

# A Wet Future for Santa Cruz?

UCSC could be beachfront property if the Greenhouse Effect theory holds true

by Robert Manetta

**I**T'S the year 2054 and you're driving across the Water Street Bridge. It isn't the short jaunt it used to be: the bridge is now a beautiful suspension-span structure that begins at Branciforte Avenue and leaps a breath-taking half-mile to the intersection of Mission Street and Highway 1.

As you traverse the span, you see the vestiges of old Santa Cruz. The county building is now half-submerged; the town clock peeks above water; city hall is now the home of Charlie the Tuna.

Sound far-fetched? Maybe not. Scientists say the "Greenhouse Effect" could make such a scenario likely within the next century.

The Greenhouse theory has been bandied about by scientists for years, but it has only been considered an imminent possibility since 1983. The bombshell was last September's 144-page report from the federal Environmental Protection Agency in which the Greenhouse Effect was predicted to wreak "catastrophic consequences" on the world with environmental symptoms that would be felt as early

as the 1990s.

The theory holds that the burning of fossil fuels (mostly by industrial plants and automobiles) creates a large, invisible layer of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere. That layer, which allows the sun's rays to enter the atmosphere but doesn't allow the resulting heat to escape, causes the atmosphere to become hotter and more humid.

With the Greenhouse Effect working at full capacity, scientists predict the temperature at the earth's poles will increase 27 degrees, which, in turn, will cause the melting of polar ice caps. Though scientists aren't sure exactly how high oceans will rise,

they predict at least a two- to 12-foot increase within the next 120 years. Some predict an even more dramatic increase, with tides climbing 200 to 300 feet.

What does the Greenhouse Effect mean to Santa Cruz? To see where your present home will be in 70 years (assuming a 60-foot increase in water level — an estimate between the smallest and largest rise), see the map.

Other possible ramifications include:

- ✓ No Boardwalk, no Mall and virtually no Capitola. Soquel is beachfront property. Mission Street, now within a one- to three-block reach of

the ocean, is Santa Cruz's main drag, complete with cute boutiques, tourist restaurants and a (semi)-original Mall flavor.

- ✓ Santa Cruz High School is coastal property, making it a perfect venue for pubescent surfers. School continues to be almost deserted during prime low tides.

- ✓ The offices of GOOD TIMES on the top floor of a three-story downtown building, are left high and dry. Santa Cruz Harbor straddles what used to be the lower part of the San Lorenzo River and is about 50 times larger than the old harbor. Boaters

still complain about access, saying submerged downtown office buildings should be "dredged" to allow year round ingress and egress.

- ✓ Street people migrate to higher ground at the UCSC campus and find a favorite place to panhandle — outside the campus's research and development park. Following the lead of penny-wise students, the panhandlers camp in the surrounding forest, giving the campus the nick-name "Shanty on a Hill."

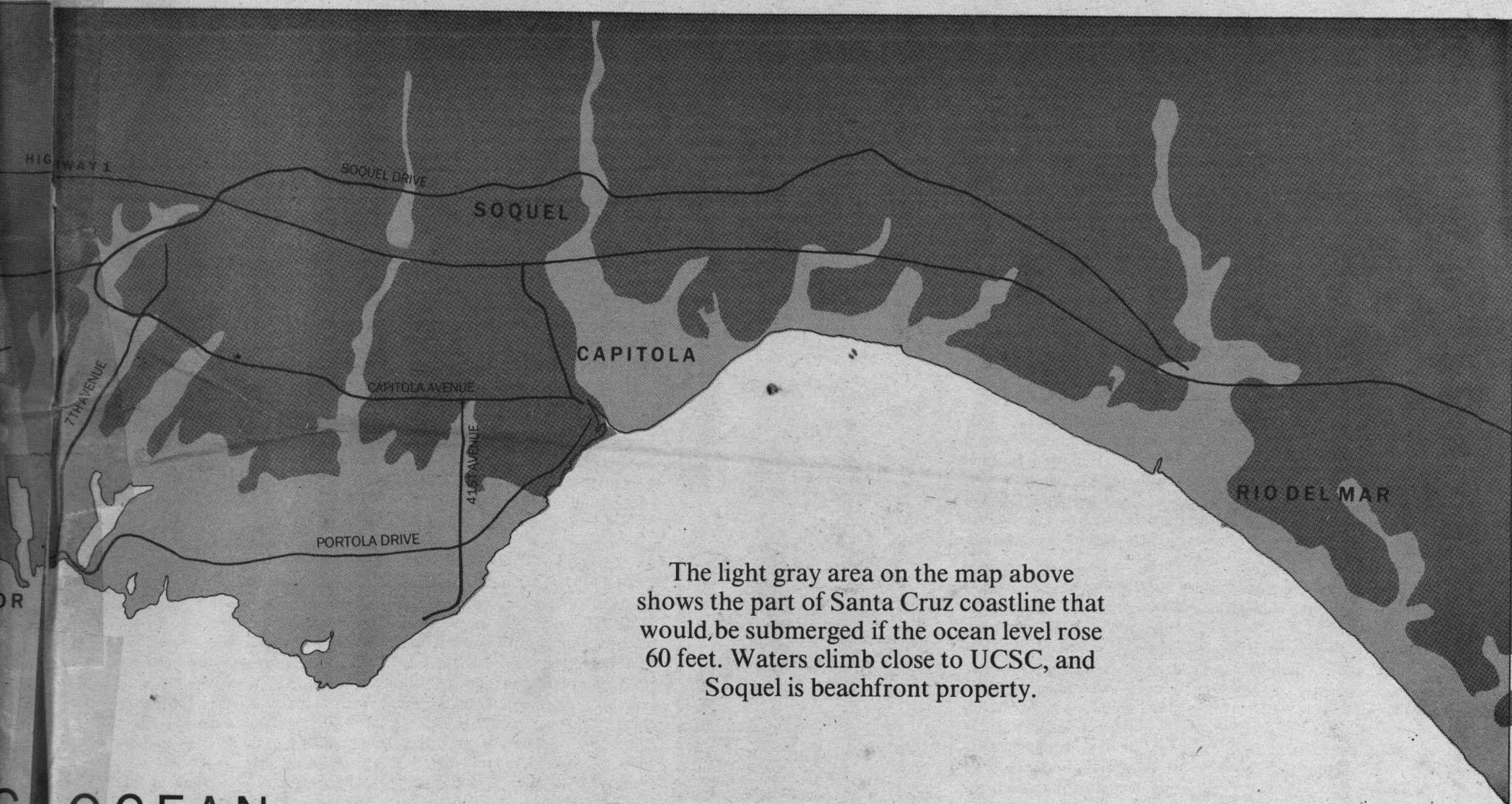
- ✓ A new wing of the R&D park opens: a company which mines the ocean riches.

- ✓ The progressive majority on the city council evacuates city hall and looks for another suitable building. But conservatives have beaten them to the punch and set up shop on the 7th Avenue Peninsula. Progressives soon establish their own city hall on the left bank of the San Lorenzo, and the debate over which faction actually rules the town rages on.

- ✓ The New Age community thrives, due mostly to the easy access to seaweed in the shallow Santa Cruz Harbor. New Agers make seaweed steaks, seaweed bread, seaweed tofu and export it across the nation. •

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The light gray area on the map above shows the part of Santa Cruz coastline that would be submerged if the ocean level rose 60 feet. Waters climb close to UCSC, and Soquel is beachfront property.

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