

# Environmental Stumbling Block: Money

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(Last of five parts)

Jim Evans of the county administrator's office talked about sources of funds to combat degradation of the environment as he addressed a special meeting of the board of supervisors on the changing environment of the county.

First, he attempted to answer the question: Why is the ques-

tion of available funds so important when we talk of preserving our environment?

"Here in Santa Cruz County we would do well to adopt the goals of the U.S. Conservation Foundation which promotes 'the rational use of the environment to achieve the highest quality of living for mankind, and to maintain an environment that is healthy, aesthetically appealing and diversified,'" Evans said.

He added that it would be

relatively easy to do so if it were not for the constant pressure of urban growth and rapid technological change clashing with the natural environment.

It is the by-products of this urban growth and technological change that required spending of money to preserve the environment, Evans continued.

Some examples of local expenditures are:

Burn vs. bury — As solid waste by-products increased, the practice of open burning at the county dump was caus-

ing air pollution and the open exposure of garbage was causing a rat infestation problem. To preserve the environment, a cut and cover burying operation was inaugurated — at an increased cost of several tens of thousands of dollars a year. To lessen the tax impact, user fees now are charged.

Flood control and aesthetics — The recent expenditure to landscape portions of the harsh banks of the San Lorenzo River flood control channel points out the cost of aesthetics in our

environment. It also should make us question flood control projects that may be planned for our other rivers and creeks, Evans said.

Open space acquisition—Maintaining open space for future generations costs more each year as the price of limited land supplies is pushed up by increased urban demands.

Liquid sewage problems—The cheapest method of liquid sewage disposal is no sewers — letting the land absorb our wastes. As population increases, we must add sewers, but it is still cheaper to dump raw sewage in Monterey Bay. Now we must treat the sewage first, Evans pointed out, and plans are proposed to dump it further out to sea. Each of these steps requires more money and added funding.

Auto exhaust — The cost of smog control devices is passed on to the customer in higher prices.

Underground utilities — Many citizens currently are asking for undergrounding of existing overhead utility poles while others object to the added assessment district taxes to recover a portion of the costs involved.

"These are just a few of the examples that indicate to preserve our environment in the face of urban growth, we must ante up added funding, either as increased taxes or from other sources," Evans noted.

In explaining the problems the county encounters in getting the necessary funds for environmental protection, Evans noted the county's main source of funding is the local property tax.

But the property tax squeeze and proposed property tax reforms are hot issues right alongside the concern for the environment, Evans observed.

With more than 60 per cent of the local tax dollar going to schools, the county must share the remainder with cities and special districts.

And with welfare taking virtually half the county's share, the state's counties have been attempting to get welfare costs shifted to the state and federal government.

Governor Reagan has proposed more sales tax and a state withholding tax to give relief to property tax payers. "With these proposed actions taking place already," Evans said, "it appears that added property taxes are not the source for funds to improve the environment."

With the current crisis in education and the cities reaching their taxing limits, he added that neither is a shift in property taxes a likely answer.

Is it possible to eke more out of the county's own budget for environmental enhancement? Evans didn't answer the question, but states that increased demands in other budget categories might make even less funds available for preservation of natural surroundings. In answer to the public criticism that politicians talk a good story about environmental preservation but don't do anything about it, Evans hints the public itself is partially to blame for not wanting to spend the necessary funds.

The heavily taxed American public is arching its back against spending proposals of all kinds. Evans quoted from a Sentinel editorial to highlight the problem of citizens and politicians alike who are concerned about the fate of the environment:

"Property owners have been rejecting all sorts of financial proposals at the polls on the grounds that taxes are already much too high. Yet the Assembly committee proposes new taxes.

"It just isn't possible to meet the normal budget demands of the state or to increase local subventions, even for environmental control projects, under the present tax base."

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### Cabrillo's New Botanic Garden Open To The Public On Sunday

The public is invited to an open house Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. at the new Cabrillo Botanic Garden, where some 350 species (wild) and hybrid rhododendrons from Europe, Asia, and North America make up the first unit of about 1½ acres.

Guests are reminded that entrance to the garden is by a one lane road between Porter Gulch Road and the main entrance to the Cabrillo campus on the Santa Cruz side. Since parking is limited at the garden,

visitors will be requested to park their cars along Soquel Drive and walk the one-eighth mile to the site.

A limited amount of parking will be available for groups that include handicapped persons.

The open house will be repeated on April 26.

Members of the Pacific and American Rhododendron Societies will be on hand to discuss the plants.

Plans call for ultimate development of 20 acres at the

site, where all of the 80 species of the world's pines will be planted, according to Dr. William Nolan, Cabrillo faculty member and prime mover in the garden project.

Some 46 species now are on hand, he said, adding that the Cabrillo garden will be the only place in the world where all the pines will be available for botanical study.

In addition to the pines and rhododendrons, Dr. Nolan said, the garden also will include

various California native plants, especially flowering shrubs, that are in danger of extinction by urban development.

Further development of the garden site will depend on public response, since the project is being operated by volunteers and financed by voluntary contributions.

Tax-deductible donations may be made to the Cabrillo College Garden Fund, 6500 Soquel Drive, Aptos.

### May Named Senior Citizens Month

County supervisors have pro-

great resource in the talents and abilities of their senior citizens, and

Governor of the State of California, the Legislature of the State of Califor-