

Water trade possible but unlikely at present

Could Santa Cruz borrow or buy water from the Soquel Creek County Water District this summer if its own supplies give out?

It's possible, said Soquel district manager Bob Johnson, but so far, there are no plans to do so.

The Soquel district is in an unusual position this year. While Santa Cruz and other water suppliers in Santa Cruz County are warning their customers to expect rationing or other use restrictions this summer as a result of the two-year drought, Soquel is telling its customers in Soquel, Capitola, Aptos, and La Selva Beach that there will be plenty of water.

Two inter-connections now exist between the Soquel and Santa Cruz systems in the midcounty. Originally set up in case of equipment failure or other emergencies, the ties make it possible for one system to borrow water from the other.

But Johnson said the results aren't very satisfactory. Water

pressure in the "short" system is poor, and because pressure levels normally are almost equal, there wouldn't be much of an exchange.

The last time it was used, the flow was about 150 gallons a minute, Johnson said. That isn't very much when you consider that Santa Cruz has one of the best water wells in the county — 1,000 gallons a minute — in Opal Cliffs.

County officials are continuing to discuss a water conservation program for this summer, but County Administrative officer Ted Durkee said last week that there are no plans to force one district to send water to another one that is in trouble.

Durkee told the county's mayors and city managers that an educational program is being planned, as well as some program to make water-saving shower heads and toilet attachments available to the public.

Installation of the devices would be on a voluntary basis, Durkee told the city officials.

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