

State Water
Official

Blasts SC

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SACRAMENTO — Santa Cruz City officials took it on the chin Tuesday from a member of the state Water Resources Control Board, who commented "there has been a lot of planning but damn little action" in the city's water programs.

The speaker was Win Adams, who conducted a hearing Tuesday on the city's request to build up its water supply in Loch Lomond reservoir by taking more water out of San Lorenzo River than is currently legal.

Adams will only make a recommendation to the entire board at its March 17 meeting, and then the board will make its final decision. It had earlier been reported that Adams alone would decide the case.

Currently, the city is allowed to pump water from San Lorenzo River at its pumping station in Felton, but only if the river is flowing at a rate of 20 cubic feet per second or more. Because of two dry winters in a row, the river has not reached that flow this year, and the city has not been able to divert any river water to Loch Lomond.

City Water Director Morris Allen testified Tuesday that the

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city would like to cut the 20 cubic feet requirement in half. The city would take water out of the river only until June.

The water, he said, would be used for storage in case the drought continues through 1978. He added that such additional storage was the only reasonable alternative open to the city to plan for a dreaded third year of the current drought.

That situation brought some critical comments from Adams. Citing testimony that untapped groundwater existed in the Santa Cruz area, Adams charged, "The city has not exercised sufficient forethought for an emergency situation... The city could use better long range planning, and I strongly suggest that you get to work on that."

Allen didn't take those words lying down. He listed extensive plans that the city has made over the years, and pointed out that even though there is ground water, "we don't have the wells, nor do we know what the effect of digging them would be."

He added his concern that sea water might intrude into the groundwater supply if it were too heavily taxed.

Adams was equal to the occasion, however. He said that the city should know more about the availability of its groundwater, and commented, "There has been a lot of planning but damn little action."

The chances appear to be good that the city will win its case with the state board. The State Department of Fish and Game has given its qualified support to the plan. An expert for the department, Paul Schappell, testified that taking the extra water out of the stream would not hurt downstream fish too much, because

the lack of water there has already prevented them from passing back to the ocean. However, he urged the state board not to allow the city to pump the extra water if late rains this year fill the river to its usual flow. If, for example, the river again flows at more than 20 cubic feet per second, the city should not be allowed to pump it to a lesser flow, Schappell said. The reasoning here is, according to his testimony, that a sudden big flow in the river could flush the impurities out of the stream and improve conditions for fish and wildlife downstream.

The Santa Cruz Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Save San Lorenzo River Association and a citizens group called the Natural Science Guild opposed the plan.