

One view of why the water's salty

By BOB SMITH

Water district critic Lawrence Frommhagen now contends that salt water intrusion in the Capitola area is limited to a narrow area extending from New Brighton Beach inland towards Tannery Gulch and Cabrillo College.

Frommhagen, who has been carrying on a running battle with Soquel Creek County Water District officials and the U.S. Geological Survey over the survey's contention that

salt water is being sucked into the groundwater basin because of an overdraft, also told the board Monday night he believes the salt water turning up in a handful of district and private wells in the Capitola-Soquel area may be fossil seawater, trapped underground millions of years ago when local land formations were lifted out of the ocean.

Frommhagen also challenged the water quality tests completed recently by the USGS on water samples collected last fall from the district's wells.

The results, reported in the Green Sheet last week, showed increasing levels of chloride (salt) in two district wells in west Capitola — Opal #1 and 3.

The latest results from the two-decade water testing program on the wells showed a significant increase in the salt content for water pumped from the shallow wells.

The district has been testing water drawn from the wells each fall. Frommhagen said his private tests of the well water made this spring show that the chloride content is remaining static or decreasing slightly, but he offered directors no specific information about his test results.

Water District General Manager Bob Johnson said

two weeks ago that the chloride (salt) content is normally less in the spring following the winter rains that recharge the basin, and that the district has followed a program of testing in the fall at the end of the heavy summer pumping season when water quality is expected to be poorest.

(Johnson was on vacation Monday night and not available for comment on Frommhagen's allegations.)

Frommhagen, who lives outside the district on Old San Jose Road in the upper Soquel Valley, told the water directors Monday night that his tests of water collected from private wells on Monterey Avenue, north of the freeway, show increasing chloride content as he moved inland. That prompts Frommhagen to believe the salt is coming from salt water trapped millions of years ago when geologic forces shoved land above the oceans.

Frommhagen also asked the board for permission to unseal a long abandoned well in the parking lot of the Capitola Theatre to test water from it. Frommhagen said the well, apparently owned by the water district, but abandoned several decades ago, is the closest known well to the coastline.

Water board president Ken Izant said the district would check on the well's status and give Frommhagen an answer later.

The Soquel Valley resident also contended that the district should be trying to purchase 2,000 acre feet of water a year from the city of Santa Cruz, not the 1,000 acre-feet that the two water agencies have agreed to exchange. Frommhagen said the water overdraft from the Purisima Formation is now 2,000 acre feet a year, if the USGS report is valid.

The latest water district production figures show that district pumping has declined for the past two months when compared to the same months in 1980 and 1979.

Asst. Manager Hank Dodd told the directors that production in February was seven percent less this year than in 1980, and pumpage in March was 2.2 percent less than in the same month of 1980.

Dodd said the district pumped 91,830,600 gallons from its wells in March, 1981, compared to 93,906,200 in March, 1980, and 85,926,900 in 1979.

February production figures showed 82,635,800 gallons pumped in the month this year, 88,761,300 in 1980, and 76,560,900 in 1979.

Per household consump-

tion in February for the last three years shows an average of 6,830 gallons in 1979, 8,592 in 1980, and 7,654 this year.

In other business Monday night, the water directors:

- Approved a contract with Salinas Pump to install a pump and motor on the new Garnet Street well.

- Approved a contract for the replacement of water mains on Bonita Drive in Rio del Mar.

- Approved a variance for Matrix Properties to get water service for 18 townhouses to be built on Park Avenue in Soquel. The board decided that the project had been delayed by errors made by the county Planning Department 1½ years ago in processing the original subdivision application, and approved the water connections because they felt the developer would have been able to complete his application before the district imposed the water connection moratorium if it had not been for the county errors.

- Denied applications by Doris Jean Breen and Dragon Daic for water meters in the Seascape and Soquel areas.