

Water Pollution

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Still Unsafe

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Pollution Count Down In Soquel

Although the fecal coliform count (a pollution indicator) continues to drop at Soquel Creek, county health officials said this morning they will keep the creek posted as unsafe for swimming and step up the frequency of tests.

Most recent test results from this week's samplings show the fecal coliform count per 100 milliliters of water was 185 at the Blue Gum Avenue storm drain, 250 at the Esplanade testing spot, 150 at the Venetian Courts, 60 at Noble Gulch and 150 where Noble Gulch enters Soquel Creek.

In June, county Health Officer Richard Svihus ordered the lagoon area be posted as unsafe for swimming. Some of the counts reached 4000 at that time. The state has recommended that 200 be the maximum allowable count where there is water contact sports.

Said Dr. Svihus today, "Since the counts are still a little unstable, we're hesitant to take down the signs. The signs will stay up for the reasonably foreseeable future. We're encouraged that the counts are going down. But the big problem in controlling this is that bacteria don't read textbooks or always cooperate."

Capitola City Manager Ryder Ray was pleased with the count reduction that has been shown since "some substantial corrections have been made. It looks as if the work effort put into this is going to bear some fruits of benefit."

However, even with the encouraging news about the drop in counts, officials did not want to be put into a position of taking down the posted signs and then be forced to put them back up again.

Part of the problem of closing Soquel Creek is that there are no county, state or federal standards to determine when a fresh water stream is polluted.

County Supervisor Ralph Sanson is currently heading a committee on water control in the county. Included in the committee are Dr. Svihus, the county counsel's office, and Ed Hanna, representing the Water Pollution Board. The committee is expected to present a plan for water control and an ordinance to set what should be the pollution standard to the county board of supervisors "in a short time," Dr. Svihus said.