

Tuesday, Feb. 4, 1986

# Loch Lomond

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Last year, the boat-launching ramp was closed July 5, because of low water level.

Although this season's rainfall in many areas of the county is near or slightly above what is normal for this time of year, there has been little runoff into the reservoir.

Until the storm this past week, the rain has been soaking into the ground, said Allen, "which is good for groundwater, but not for the reservoir."

The water level in the reservoir is only 49-percent full today, said Allen. Sixty percent is considered a normal level at this time of year, he said.

Allen said rain over the past few days produced the first run-off of the season into the reservoir, bringing the level up two feet to the 548-foot mark.

But until the water mark hits above 555 — so boats can be safely launched — the reservoir will be off-limits to the public, said Allen.

Allen is chiefly concerned with safety and the city being held liable for possible accidents.

Adding to the safety problems are exposed tree stumps — making navigation difficult for boaters — and exposed, steep banks. The low water level means the distance between the end of the dock and the water's edge is 30 to 40 feet with a six- or seven-foot drop in elevation, said Allen.

The city's "precarious" situation with liability insurance — with skyrocketing rates and minimum coverage — "makes it imperative to minimize the city's exposure to public liability," said Allen in a report to water commissioners.

"Although the (Loch Lomond) park environment is hazardous by nature, the abnormally low lake level makes the situation extreme."

Water is being pumped regularly to the reservoir from the Water Department's Felton dam to boost the level, said Allen.

The low reservoir level also spells woes for the city's drinking-water supplies.

Allen said his department will continue to monitor water levels in coming weeks before making decisions on whether conservation measures will be imposed this summer for water users.

On Jan. 27 — before the most recent storm — rain measurements taken at the dam and at a watershed station near the dam showed levels below those in the drought year of 1977, Allen reported. The 1977 level was 17.78. Only 14.5 inches had fallen in the watershed by Dec. 31, he reported.

In the city of Santa Cruz, today's measurements showed the rain total for the season to be about one-inch above the normal rainfall for this time of year.