

GREEN SHEET  
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## Now it's official—tax rate halved

Santa Cruz County Supervisors made official Tuesday what everyone's been expecting since June:

Tax bills for most property owners will be cut in half this year.

Supervisors approved a series of recommendations from Auditor-Controller Art Merrill which sharply cut back funds for some of the special districts which used to have their own tax rates.

As a result of Prop. 13, property taxes are limited to one per cent of the property's "full cash value," plus small increases for inflation and

extra taxes in districts which have outstanding bonds.

(The one per cent is the same thing as saying the tax rate is \$4 per \$100 assessed valuation, because assessed valuation is supposed to be one-quarter of the full cash value.)

Average tax rate in Watsonville comes to \$4.907 per \$100 assessed value, compared with a combined tax rate of around \$10 a year ago. (In the downtown parking district — mostly business property — there's another \$2 tax.)

Hardest hit in the dollar

shortfall were the county service areas that fund parks and recreation in the county, two flood control accounts and two street lighting districts.

The county park and recreation fund is \$104,547 short this year, Merrill told supervisors.

The construction account for the Santa Cruz County Flood Control District's Zone 5 was short \$75,003, compared to the pre-Prop. 13 income estimates prepared by the county Public Works Department. The flood control district's Zone 4 fund has an income shortfall of

\$27,273 this year.

Major shortages were also recorded in the county's Highway Safety Lighting Fund and the Residential Street Lighting Fund.

Highway Safety Lighting (used to pay the costs of traffic signal maintenance and operation) will be short \$21,714 this year. Residential Street Lighting has a \$20,220 shortage, Merrill said.

In each case, Merrill recommended that the supervisors cut that amount from the fund's expenditure budget.

Other shortages noted by

Merrill in his report to the board were:

Sand Dollar Beach County Service Area No. 5 (sewer maintenance) — \$629; School Crossing Guard Fund CSA No. 9 — \$3,789; Davenport Sewer Maintenance — \$510; Rolling Woods County Service Area, No. 10 — \$372; Septic Tank Maintenance County Service Area No. 12 — \$471.

The tax rate for Santa Cruz drops from roughly \$9 to \$5, for Capitola from \$9.44 to \$4.31 and the Rio del Mar area from \$9.14 to \$4.66.

The tax rates established by board action Tuesday will raise about \$33 million in the coming year, compared to the \$67 million raised last year, the auditor's figures showed.

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