

SV water agency seeks aid

Scotts Valley - 1990
Mañana Woods may need
to secure emergency supplies

By DAN WHITE
Sentinel staff writer

SCOTTS VALLEY — Tiny, staunchly independent Mañana Woods Mutual Water Co. has been criticizing the Scotts Valley Water District for years. Once it even sued the district.

But circumstances have forced Mañana Woods to seek help from the same district it holds responsible for many of the area's water-supply problems and its own dwindling well levels.

The 50-year-old private water company, which serves 119 homes just outside city limits, is faced with contamination and declining levels in its two wells. Now Mañana Woods has asked both the Scotts Valley and San Lorenzo Valley water districts if they can spare some of their supply in case the small district must close its two wells and buy 70 acre-feet of water per year.

The prospect of going from critic to customer is not something Mañana Woods officials relish.

"We'd prefer everything to stay copacetic and status quo, but we have to be realistic," said Ron Hill, a board member for the water company.

No one knows how much life is left in the Mañana Woods wells. Residents say it depends on future city development.

"We're either looking at our wells being closed because there's no water or so contaminated that we couldn't use them," Mañana Woods board president Sue Roth said this week.

Since April 1998, the Scotts Valley

'We're
either
looking at
our wells
being
closed
because
there's no
water or
so con-
taminated
that we
couldn't
use
them.'

— Sue Roth,
Mañana
Woods
board
president



Please see WATER — BACK PAGE

A-12 — Thursday, June 24, 1999 — Sentinel

Water

Continued from Page A1

Water District has not approved new water hook-ups. District manager Jon Sansing said the district would have to change that policy if it is to serve Mañana Woods.

But Scotts Valley district board member Joe Miller had another interpretation.

"The water to serve these people has always been coming from the (same) aquifer, so it's not really our water," he said. "It's not as if this is a new development coming in."

Neither the Scotts Valley or San Lorenzo Valley water district has ruled on Mañana Woods' informal request.

Any water arrangement between

Mañana Woods and the Scotts Valley Water District would require the Local Agency Formation Commission's approval because Mañana Woods lies outside the district's jurisdiction, Sansing said.

Mañana Woods' worries were underscored by a recent county Health Services Agency report that recommended it seek an alternate supply, and that its water dilemmas would worsen unless groundwater management practices changed.

Regardless of a possible future arrangement, Mañana Woods residents still hold the city and Scotts Valley Water District responsible for much of their supply concerns.

Two years ago, Mañana Woods sued the district to make it redo a report on area water shortage contingencies. At the time, Mañana Woods residents said they were worried Scotts Valley's water use

during a drought would affect the future of the aquifer, including their own supply.

Redrafting the report cost Scotts Valley Water District ratepayers \$80,000, according to the district. Memory of the incident led two former district board directors to question helping a group that had cost district customers thousands of dollars, during a time when its own supply was in question.

Asked to characterize past relations between Scotts Valley Water District and Mañana Woods, Sansing said, "The word would be adversarial."

Outspoken Mañana Woods resident Betty Petersen said Mañana Woods was forced to sue the district because it ignored its aquifer concerns.

Mañana Woods' two wells on Kings Village Road were drilled long before Scotts Valley incorporated in the 1960s. Since

then, residents have watched the city spring up around their wells.

Last year, traces of the fuel additive MTBE were found in the Mañana Woods wells. Benzene was detected earlier. The contamination is widely blamed on leaky gasoline-storage tanks at service stations.

An out-of-court settlement from a collection of oil companies is paying to clean up the contamination and filter the polluted water, Petersen said, but supply remains a concern.

Petersen said that in 20 years, the water level has gone down from 20 to 170 feet below the surface.

While Miller said helping Mañana Woods is workable, he is pushing for Mañana Woods to let the district run a water main through the Mañana Woods streets to serve a major new Gateway South hotel. He wants this to be a condition imposed on them.