

WATER SUPPLY Soquel's good fortune

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SOQUEL — Residents here and throughout Mid-County have the good fortune of living over a generous underground-water supply.

The 38,000 residents served by the Soquel Creek Water District haven't been required to conserve water during the past five straight drought years. Voluntary conservation has been encouraged.

"Location, location, location. Isn't that what they say in the real-estate business?" asks Bob Johnson, district general manager. "We have the good fortune of overlying a substantial groundwater formation."

Despite the "good fortune," Johnson and directors of his water board aren't relaxing.

"We recognize there are limits to this groundwater basin," Johnson says. "We know we have to develop future sources of water if we expect to sustain the demand."

Future Mid-County water sources include a five-acre holding pond,

or "diversion dam," on Soquel Creek above Soquel. The district is in the environmental-impact report phase for such a dam, which could be finished in 10 years, Johnson says.

The dam would be made of rubber, and would be inflated only in winter to capture water that normally would flow out to sea.

The Soquel district also has applied to the state for water rights for the long-discussed Glenwood Dam project. However, that project is far in the future, Johnson said.

The water company also has a contingency plan that would require mandatory water conservation, if needed.

In order to ensure a plentiful underground supply, the Soquel Creek Water District operates the most extensive well-monitoring network in Santa Cruz County. The district has spent more than \$1 million in the past 10 years on more than 50 monitoring wells to measure fresh-water levels against possible seawater intrusion, Johnson said.