

Well-drilling ban extended by county

By BUD O'BRIEN

Declaring that "a water shortage and emergency" exists in the Soquel-Aptos ground water basin, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors imposed new water conservation regulations on that area Tuesday.

With supervisors Dan Forbus and E. Wayne Moore Jr. dissenting, the board majority approved an ordinance restricting the drilling of new water wells in the ground water basin

and an ordinance mandating that conservation measures be followed by current users of water in the region.

The board's action has the effect of extending to the entire ground water basin restrictions already imposed within the boundaries of the Soquel Creek County Water District. The area involved draws its water from the same underground aquifer (the Purisima Formation) as

does the water district, and thus, in the judgment of the supervisors, should also be subject to conservation regulations.

The well-drilling restriction ordinance essentially forbids the drilling of new wells, except for those property owners who obtain a building permit under the county's permit rationing system and for certain other uses, such as agriculture.

Coupled with the restriction is a ban on minor land divisions in the area outside the water district that have not already been scheduled for hearings before the Board of Supervisors or the zoning administrator.

The water conservation ordinance adds some enforcement teeth to the conservation efforts of the water district and extends the regulations to that portion of the Purisima Formation outside the water district — which is mostly land in the hills above Soquel and Aptos.

Among other things, it prohibits the washing of sidewalks, driveways, dwelling exteriors, motor vehicles, boats, trailers, etc., and provides for a fine of \$100 for each day of such violations.

At the suggestion of Mid-county supervisor Roblev

Levy, the board added provisions calling for a review of the ordinances within a year so that they can be repealed or amended if the evidence supports such action.

Pajaro Valley Supervisor Moore was the most outspoken in his opposition to today's actions. In Moore's view, the evidence available doesn't demonstrate that any emergency exists in the upland areas of the water basin, and that existing restrictions within the water district are ample to deal with proven deficiencies in the water supply.

Moore urged the board not to take any action until the U.S. Geological Survey compiles its "contour map" of the underground formation, which it is expected will give a more reliable picture of the water situation. That map is scheduled to be ready for scrutiny by the board some time in June.

Supervisor Levy noted that the action taken was by no means a moratorium on well drilling — allowing as it does well drilling by anyone who acquires a building permit. She added that the conservation measures for other water users simply reinforced the position already taken by the directors of the water district.