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Santa Cruz reaction

Growth forecast: 'Wow, gee, yuk!'

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SANTA CRUZ — In this town where "valley go home" bumper stickers are common and County Supervisors once proposed putting a chain across Highway 17 at the summit, word was received Thursday that the county's population is expected to almost double in the next 22 years.

"Wow!" said attorney Jack Jacobson.

"Geel!" said convention and visitors bureau director Barbara Klein.

"Oh, yuk!" said county planner Linda Wilschusen.

"Utterly amazing!" said Coastal Guide magazine publisher Richard Swanson.

"Fine, if that's what they want," said a tourist from "far up north," who refused to identify himself or get drawn farther into the discussion.

"That projection seems valid," said street musician Jeff Sacharow, "in view of the rate of growth I've seen in the past seven years. This is a really neat place. I don't like the idea of all those people coming here, but they have as much right to do that as I did."

Then he added: "If all those people come here, this place might lose its unique character and all the people would move away."

The discussions were prompted by the announcement Thursday that the population research section of the state Department of Finance had predicted Santa Clara County will gain nearly half a million new residents by the year 2000.

The same state office predicted that tiny Santa Cruz County, the second smallest in the state (only San Francisco County is smaller), would see one of the highest percentages of growth of all California counties in that same period. The figures show the county grow-

Santa Clara County's population will grow by 484,000 by the turn of the century, but apparently won't reach the levels predicted by various municipal and commercial dreamers.

Santa Cruz County, on the other hand, will experience an astounding doubling of its population in the next 23 years, while Monterey County will grow by 36 per cent.

Those are the forecasts of the State Department of Finance,

which released figures Thursday showing Santa Clara County will have a population of 1,664,200 by the year 2000.

That is up 41 per cent over the county's current 1,180,000 population. But it's far short of the finance department's 1975 prediction of 1.8 million population in the county in the year 2000.

Even so, Santa Clara County will experience the fourth largest numerical growth rate in the state.

And California's population is

expected to increase from the current 21,198,000 to 29,342,000, the finance department forecasts.

Santa Cruz County is expected to handle more than an average share of that growth if the state forecasts pan out.

Its population is predicted to grow from the current 156,000 to 310,000 — an astounding increase of 98.9 per cent.

Monterey County, with a current population of 266,000 persons, is expected to grow to 414,900 in the same period of time.

In making its predictions, the state finance department's population research unit said increased migration into California and a longer life expectancy will offset a long-range decline in the birth rate to 2.1 children per woman. That is the so-called "replacement level" birth rate advocated by Zero Population Growth.

State researchers previously had set the birth rate at 2.4 children per woman, but decreased it to reflect trends.

They also said the number of persons migrating into California in future years will exceed by 150,000 annually the number of persons leaving the state.

Santa Clara County's population has grown from a little less than 300,000 in 1950 to 639,615 in 1960 and 1,065,313 in 1970.

Whether Santa Clara County meets its forecast population level for the year 2000 depends in large part on factors that were not included in the state survey but are currently under study in the Bay Area.

The keys to population, according to a study currently under way by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), are the number of jobs and housing units available in Santa Clara County.

ABAG and MTC planners say that if the current general plans of the county's 15 cities are followed, the land now designated for residential use will be "built out" by 1987, although there is enough industrial reserve land to last until the year 2020.

Because the MTC-ABAG planners say those current general plans would allow a countywide population of 1,458,000 persons by 1990, the cities would have to cut into their industrial reserves for housing if the population forecasts of the state finance department are to work out.

If the state finance department forecasts are accurate, only San

Francisco County will experience a decrease in population. The number of persons residing in the city will decline from the current 667,600 to 627,900 at the turn of the century.

Los Angeles County will show the greatest numerical increase — 1,092,000 new residents — in the last quarter of this century, and will have a population exceeding 8 million by the year 2000.

San Diego County will have the second largest growth — 1,069,700 persons — bringing its turn of the century population to about 2.6 million.

Orange County, which will increase from its current population of 1,712,600 to 2,755,800, will have the third largest numerical growth in the state.

Tiny El Dorado County in the Sierra Nevada, with a current population of about 59,400, is expected to have the greatest percentage increase — 164.3 — for a turn-of-the-century population of 157,000.

Other Central California county populations predicted by the year 2000 include San Benito, 31,500, up from 19,800; San Mateo, 659,500, up from 578,700; San Luis Obispo, 218,800, up from 126,800; Merced, 177,500, up from 118,900, and Alameda, 1,226,200, up from 1,091,700.

Ambulance firm loses its license

SCOTTS VALLEY — The Valley Ambulance Service here has suddenly lost its license.

County Administrator Ted Durkee said this week that the California Highway Patrol and the County of Santa Cruz have notified owner James Nielsen that his local license and his state authority to operate an ambulance service are being suspended for failure to maintain proper insurance coverage.

There will be no break in emergency service coverage, however, Durkee said. Residents of the San Lorenzo Valley will continue to receive services via fire district rescue units there.

Durkee said that Ben Lomond, Boulder Creek, Felton and Scotts Valley fire departments are all equipped to respond to emergency medical calls "and, in fact, been the first emergency to the scene of an accident for years."



ing from its July, 1975 population of 156,000 to 310,300 by 2000 — an increase of 98.9 per cent.

Publisher Swanson said he doesn't believe the population projection is realistic. "I don't see how Santa Cruz County could grow that much," he said.

Attorney Jacobson commented that the population figure is "frightening. The people would be stacked up on top of each other."

He predicted that if such a population trend does ensue, "the poor people are going to have to be moving out and the rich people moving in because the only industry we have here is the service type industry, and that serves the affluent but does not provide jobs for the poor."

He also questioned the feasibility of an increase in population "in view of the water shortage we now have."

County advance planner Chris Schenk said the county has received no notification of any such population projection as cited by the state Department of Finance Thursday.

He said, "We have two basic sets of figures that we are working with here. One figure is a policy guideline set by the Board of Supervisors, which has a goal of only 203,000 population."

"A study we had done recently by the firm of Gruen and Gruen, based on a detailed analysis of our water and sewer facilities and detailed employment information set

an end-of-the-century population figure of 276,000 people."

He said of the state Department of Finance's announcement "that is not the figure we are using on the local level."

Executive Vice President L. A. Helgeson of the Santa Cruz Board of Realtors, said he thinks the population projection made by the state "sounds reasonable."

He said, "We are having a rapid growth now and there's a whole new generation coming up between now and the year 2000."

"That figure that was cited by state might actually be a decrease in percentage if you compare it to the rate of growth we're already having."