

Sewers + Sewage

# SV sewage plant full to the brim

## Officials ask board to increase limits

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SCOTTS VALLEY — Sewer capacity remains a concern for city officials, who learned Wednesday that the plant still is eating into the 5-percent reserve capacity required by the City Council.

The report from Scott Hamby, Scotts Valley's wastewater and environmental program manager, comes less than a month after the council put a virtual moratorium on new building permits until the end of the year at least.

This is the first time the plant has operated so close to its permitted daily treatment capacity of 890,000 gallons, according to Hamby.

That's important because the Regional Water Quality Board takes a dim view of sewer plants operating at or above capacity. Such opera-

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tion threatens their ability to properly treat the wastewater before it flows into Monterey Bay.

The board already has issued a letter to the city pointing out how close to its permitted capacity the plant is running.

City officials have asked the board to increase their plant's permitted capacity by 30,000 gallons, which would solve the short-term problem. If that request is approved in early December, the council likely would lift the moratorium.

In the long run, the plant's \$7-million expansion project, expected to be finished late next fall, would provide adequate treatment facilities for the growth that's anticipated in Scotts Valley, said Hamby. After the expansion, the plant will be able to treat up to 1.5 million

gallons per day.

Hamby's report for October indicates the plant has treated an average of 832,000 gallons of sewage each day since July.

The actual flow of sewage through the plant has crept up each month, ranging from 809,000 gallons a day in July to 846,000 gallons in October. The increase in flow between September and October, however, was not significant, said Hamby.

The plant also must observe the council's mandate that 44,500 gallons of capacity per day be left in reserve. The council said there will be no new building permits issued as long as that 5-percent reserve is unavailable.

The plant also has an obligation to maintain sewer-treatment space for developers who already have

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building permits. That amounts to another 26,685 gallons per day.

By adding together the average daily flow, the mandated reserve capacity and the obligation to building projects now under way, said Hamby, the plant was 14,185 gallons per day above its permitted capacity in October.

The good news is that treatment-capacity figures won't be monitored as closely during the upcoming rainy season. That's because the amount of wastewater rises dramatically, but much of the excess is storm water, which does not have to be treated before it's released and therefore does not tax the capacity of the facility.

For the first time, Hamby will try to monitor how much of the increased winter flow is storm water, to better gauge whether actual wastewater from Scotts Valley homes and business continues to increase.

"It's never been an issue before because we've never been at capacity," said Hamby.