

# Corcoran Lagoon Pollution Topic Of Friday Meeting

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The Santa Maria del Mar Association will sponsor a public meeting Friday at 7:30 p.m. in Del Mar School on the pollution of Corcoran Lagoon and the adjacent beach area and the question of annexation or incorporation for Live Oak.

The association is comprised of 60 registered members, most of them homeowners on Corcoran Lagoon. The group thinks of itself as an improvement association, but places special emphasis on the protection of the natural qualities of the lagoon and beach, to which most of its members have easement rights.

A primary concern of the organization is the "continuing pollution" of the lagoon by the Rodeo Gulch sewage pumping station on Portola Drive.

The station pumps sewage from the lagoon area to the East Cliff treatment plant.

Association President Earl Taft said several years ago he discovered an overflow pipe leading from the station into the lagoon. When he asked for an explanation from the county public works department, he added, the department at first denied existence of the pipe. Later he continued, the public works people admitted the pipe existed, but insisted it was used only in case of pump failure or overflow emergencies.

And, Taft continued, the overflow emergency conditions are continuing.

July 18 of this year was a particularly hot day in adjacent valley area, Taft reminded. It resulted in an exodus to the coast and heavy use of apartments and summer homes in the lagoon area.

Protective screens at the pump station evidently plugged up under the deluge of added sewage, he surmised, and the station overflowed, running raw sewage into the lagoon.

Taft said the county denied the overflow had taken place, but area residents knew it because of color changes in the lagoon.

Chemical changes in the effluent cause the lagoon to run through a variety of color changes from light orange, to red and dark green and brown. He said spots of dark green algae still are visible in the lagoon, which was clear prior to July 18.

In the winter, Taft pointed out, the station overflows frequently under the rush of storm drain runoff. But at that time of year the lagoon washes out quickly and does not change color.

Taft proposes an alarm system for the pumping station to warn when levels are rising too high, along with an automatic screen cleaning system.

Pollution counts taken in the lagoon by the county public health department have indicated pollution is within acceptable limits. But Taft pointed out there are some 10 million cubic feet of water in the lagoon, and just because the effluent is diluted does not mean pollution doesn't exist.

The president pointed out that a larger pump had been installed in the station last year and overflowing has not been as bad since then.

"The situation has improved," he concluded, "but it still is not good enough."

