

water supply 4/12/55

Scant Rain, Greater Demand Increase Pumping Plant Use

Scanty rainfall and increased water consumption have forced the San Lorenzo river pumping plant into operating 16 hours daily at least two months ahead of normal schedule, Water Superintendent Weston Webber disclosed today.

Thirty-six million gallons had been pumped this month by last evening in contrast with last April, when only three million gallons were pumped all month. The daily average for the month is three million gallons and the current rate is four million gallons, Webber said.

The pumping plant didn't swing into 16-hour operation last year until the latter part of June. Present total daily consumption is seven million gallons—four million from the pumping plant, three million from coastal sources.

Although Webber believes the situation won't become critical enough to require rationing he does think the water system will be soaking up just about every available gallon before the summer is over—unless Mother Nature delivers rain.

Rainfall has been virtually nil this spring and the countryside needs "three or four" inches to bring the river and other sources up to par. Scant precipitation plus the prevailing warm weather means heavier demand on a smaller supply, Webber said.

Irrigation of farms along the coast later will draw off water from Laguna creek, Majors creek and Liddell spring, the three coastal sources, and property-owners are using water for lawns and gardens right now. Farmers and gardeners would require less water if spring rainfall had been up to normal, Webber said.

The pumping plant "will probably be on 24-hour-a-day operation throughout the summer unless we get some rain," he prophesied, recalling that in 1947 the pumps ran 24 hours daily for three solid months.

Things are better this year than in 1947—but then demand has increased, Webber said.

"I don't think we're going to run out of water but it'll be tight," was Webber's view.

If Santa Cruz had dam-stored water to draw on there would be no reason for uneasiness, he observed. "We're just depending on stream flow. If we had water storage we wouldn't have any problem."

Four potential dam sites—at Bald Mountain, Upper Soquel, Glenwood and Doyle Gulch—have been explored by a geological firm and the city water commission is awaiting completed reports on the surveys.

Irrigators will hit coastal supplies hardest in August, cutting the present daily flow of three million gallons down to less than a million. The water department will counteract this by pumping 24 hours daily from the San Lorenzo at a capacity of 6½ million gallons and drawing another 2½ million gallons from two wells situated near the river opposite the plant.

These sources, together with the million or so gallons that should reach the city from the coast, will maintain daily output in the neighborhood of 10 million gallons this summer, Webber said.

Water from the pumping plant is forced directly into the system with the surplus going to the Bay street reservoir. Webber estimated the reservoir's present supply at 31 million gallons—eight million gallons short of capacity. Even so, there is enough water stored there to supply the city's needs for more than four days at current flow without replenishment from any source, Webber said.

Delano (P).—Wasco Police Chief Robert M. (Tiny) Oliver, 38, died in a hospital here today after an illness of more than a month. He had entered the hospital for an operation.