

INSECTS

SJM 1-26-93

18

Supervisors set to work out bugs in abatement effort

BY LEE QUARNSTROM
Mercury News Staff Writer

Fearing that torrential winter rains have created vast mosquito-spawning ponds in the wetlands of the Pajaro Valley, Santa Cruz County supervisors are scheduled today to debate which local bureaucracy might best be trusted to eliminate the pesky bugs.

Mosquitoes, always a problem in the Watsonville area after wet winters, were so bad last year, says Supervisor Ray Belgard, that duffers at a north Monterey County golf course were unable to play.

The insects breed in the sloughs west of Watsonville, the lakes east of town and in wetlands in the Corralitos area. Many of those areas, dry during most of the recent drought years, are wet and deep — and likely breeding places for huge populations of skeeters.

Like his Watsonville-area constituents, Belgard favors a program to nip the bug problem in the bud. Unlike some folks at the county government center, though, he does not favor formation of a county-wide taxing district to pay for mosquito abatement.

"It doesn't make sense," Belgard said Monday of a plan to form a county service area that would take in all corners of Santa Cruz County. Instead, Belgard — and city officials in Watsonville — want to take what they say is a more immediate step and join an existing Monterey County agency that kills mosquitoes.

Although that agency, the North Salinas Valley

See **BUGS**, Back Page

Supervisors to debate who will debug wetlands

■ BUGS

from Page 1B

Mosquito Abatement District, was not interested at first in annexing the Pajaro Valley, it is now, according to Belgard.

He said it would be more expedient for the Pajaro Valley to annex to the North Salinas Valley district. That, he said, is also the unanimous wish of the Watsonville City Council.

Belgard said Watsonville officials feel they would not have a strong-enough voice if they joined a service area administered by the board of supervisors.

If annexed to the agency in

north Monterey County, though, they would have a bigger role in the decision-making process.

Last month, a majority of Belgard's colleagues on the board of supervisors told the county administrative officer to pursue formation of a service area to solve the mosquito problem. Belgard said he is hoping today's decision will be to allow annexation.

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED

The public hearing on the mosquito-abatement problem begins at 10:45 a.m. in the board chambers, fifth floor, 701 Ocean St., Santa Cruz.