

Posting Of Soquel Creek Poses Capitola Quandary

Not having a dam on Soquel Creek has become foremost on the minds of many Capitola residents.

While city councilmen zipped through public hearings on a zoning map, city budget and sign ordinance (see story above), much time was spent on discussion of the lagoon foreclosure Monday night.

The question left unanswered was: Since the county recommended the lagoon not be constructed, and since the state said the lagoon could not be built on the state beach property until county approval is given, why isn't it posted by one of those bodies?

The major hangup in answering that question is: At the present time, neither the state or county has developed pollution standards for fresh water stream. And until such a standard is set it appears doubtful that anyone will be responsible for posting the Soquel Creek as polluted and unsafe for swimming.

It was obvious at Monday's council session that some people were not satisfied with the current "hanging situation."

City Manager Ryder Ray summed up most of the feelings. "It's a state beach and a county recommendation not to dam the creek. One of them should take it upon themselves to post the creek and notify the people. The city is the one suffering from this thing."

This morning, county health officer Dr. Richard Svihus said his department is "proceeding cautiously, but thoroughly" in

setting up a county pollution standard for fresh water streams. He said the department plans to make a recommendation on the matter in about two weeks.

Said Svihus, "What we recommend may be precedent setting for the entire state, since the state does not have pollution standards for streams. Therefore, when we do make our recommendation, we want to make sure it is reasonable and safe, and one which we can stand behind. We have no justification in posting until we have a standard."

In May, the county environmental health department recommended the Soquel Creek dam not be built for swimming purposes, because tests indicated a fecal coliform count of 465 at some places. A state health department official then stated a count of 200 has been used as the low pollution standard for water contact sports by the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

However, going over the recommendation, the city council voted 3 to 2 to build the dam anyway.

That seemed fine with residents, but the state later said the dam could not be built on its beach property until the county gave the State Department of Beaches and Parks an "all-clear" notification.

It appears the situation will remain in a state of "limbo" until the county health department comes up with a recommended standard.