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Soquel Creek Still Not Pollution-Free

County Health Officer Richard Svihus didn't give Soquel Creek a clean bill of health, but he didn't scotch Capitola's plans for a sand recreation dam as some county officials had predicted he might.

Svihus, along with Environmental Health Officer Ray Talley and Capitola Supervisor Ralph Sanson, appeared before Monday night's Capitola City Council meeting to report on progress in efforts to track down sources of pollution to Soquel Creek and its lagoon.

There has been much progress in recent weeks in shutting off pollution sources, but the county officials reported many test samples still are above the safe level for water contact sports. High pollution counts last year resulted in the county posting the creek against swimming and other water sports and halted construction of the traditional sand dam to form a swimming pool on Capitola Beach.

City officials are anxious to construct the dam again this year, partly because it is a valuable tourist draw. But there had been predictions among county officials that Svihus would rule against the dam at Monday night's council meeting.

He didn't, but the three county officers did note that while there has been reduction in the pollution counts, many still are above the safe level.

Talley pointed out that in one particularly high count area — the point where Noble Gulch Joins the creek — 88 per cent of the tests continue to show more than 200 fecal coli form bacteria per 100 mililiters of water,

Sources of pollution continue to be an elusive quarry. Talley noted there appears to be no pattern as to the time of heaviest counts. He said the county had conducted tests during the Washington's Birthday holiday weekend and had found no appreciable increase.

Councilman Ronald Graves pointed out the dye tracing method isn't working well in the effort to trace sources and asked what the county intends to try now.

Talley said officials have considered a radioactive tracing method, but a check with the state revealed the process requires so many safeguards it would take at least a month to put it in operation.

Svihus added that if the method were used the county might wind up posting the beach against use because of the hot tracing materials.

Mayor John Lappin said he thought the comprehensive program now underway probably is the best immediate solution. He thought the search team should simply continue to attempt to isolate sources by a door - to - door hunt.

"If we continue the process of elimination, we're going to find it," he observed. "It's got to be there."

Water Pollution