



PAUL ROGERS — MERCURY NEWS

Chief Ranger Walt Cacace at Loch Lomond, Santa Cruz's lone reservoir, which is 59 percent full.

Loch Lomond

Recent downpours not enough

BY PAUL ROGERS
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No water has run off into the reservoir, because the ground isn't saturated.

Rains that soaked the Santa Cruz Mountains during the past two weeks are a good omen, but so far only a drop in the bucket, say area water experts. Steady downpours will be needed all winter to make up for a dismally dry rainy season last year or Santa Cruz risks slipping back into the drought patterns of 1987-1992.

"Let's hope it doesn't quit," said Chief Ranger Walt Cacace, who oversees Loch Lomond near Lompico, Santa Cruz's only reservoir.

Since the rains began in mid-October, 11.26 inches have fallen at Loch Lomond, compared with only .75 inches at this time last November.

None of that water has run off into the reservoir, however, because the ground isn't saturated yet.

Zuni Indians of New Mexico believed there were two types of rain, male and female, said Cacace. "Male" rain fell hard and washed away. "Female" rain fell softer, soaking into the earth and nourishing crops.

"We need female rain right now," Cacace said. "Then some male rain to fill the reservoir."

Loch Lomond can use every drop.

The remote reservoir, surrounded by dense forests, deer, bobcats and the occasional golden eagle, is 59 percent full. Last year at this time, it was 77 percent full.

That means Loch Lomond holds 512 million gallons less now than it did last November — about as much water as the city draws from the reservoir in an entire summer.

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