

# Soquel water gets good rating

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SOQUEL — Water provided by the Soquel Creek Water District meets all state and federal water-quality requirements, according to a study released this week by the Water District.

The study, prepared by the Palo Alto consulting firm of Metcalf and Eddy, also examined customer complaints and conducted a public opinion survey.

"There were no real surprises. The water's good," said Robert Johnson Jr., the Water District's general manager.

The Soquel Creek Water District serves more than 12,000 customers in the Soquel and Aptos areas.

About half of the complaints logged at the district office were for dirty water, the report said. The remainder of the complaints were for disagreeable odors or taste.

The survey found most of the complaints came from the Aptos and Seacliff areas, Johnson said.

The wells which serve this area tap into the Purisma aquifer, which is naturally high in minerals. Two of the wells, the Aptos Creek and Ledyard Way wells, exceed the secondary limits for iron and manganese, the report said.

"It is not a health hazard," Johnson said. "It causes discoloration and (less) clarity, and it may stain clothes, but we've pretty well licked the problem in the system."

The district is drilling an additional well and treatment plant in the Aptos area. The project,

which is under way, will take about a year to complete, Johnson said. The plant will cost about \$500,000.

To reduce the complaints of dirty water, the report recommends that the district flush the main water lines more often.

With time, residue builds up in the pipes, discoloring the water when it is disturbed, Johnson said.

Flushing the water mains also reduces the chance for bacterial growth, the report said.

"Flushing the pipes is basically just flowing the water over the ground," Johnson said. "We just have to get all the smaller main lines flushed."

Most of the discoloration comes from residential pipes, Johnson said. He recommends that homeowners also periodically flush their pipes.

Johnson said flushing the pipes will not affect the district's water reserves.

"The district is very fortunate," he said. "Our supply is all groundwater and we haven't even begun to stress it, though we are looking into it."

The fewest number of complaints come from the Rio Del Mar and La Selva Beach areas. The water for these areas comes from the Aromas Sands aquifer. Aromas Sands water is naturally softer and lower in mineral content, Johnson said.

The softness or hardness of water is determined by the amount of calcium carbonate in the water. Calcium carbonate, as described by Johnson, is the white residue left behind when water is boiled. The more calcium

carbonate, the harder the water.

"Soft water feels nicer," Johnson said. "Hard water builds up residue and it takes more soap to lather up."

Johnson said it is economically unfeasible to treat and soften the water district-wide.

The survey also showed that many people in the Water District either filter their water or buy bottled water. While most of those buying bottled water said they did so for the taste, others said they thought the district water was perhaps unhealthy.

Johnson disagreed.