

Caballero Times & Green Sheet 8/27/70
Guilty plea to pollution^{pl}

Owners of a Soquel frozen foods company and a Ben Lomond refrigeration company pleaded guilty in Santa Cruz Municipal Court Tuesday morning to charges of polluting Soquel Creek.

Sentencing was continued for three weeks by Municipal Court Judge Donald May. The men were charged under a State Fish and Game Code section which carries a \$500 maximum fine and a maximum sentence of six months in jail.

Ron Lang, State Fish and Game Warden, said that an estimated 20,000 fish were killed by the discharge of ammonia into Soquel Creek. He added that more than a year may be required before the ecological balance of the creek is restored.

The guilty pleas were entered by Gilbert L. Paul, manager of the Soquel Meat and Frozen

Foods Company, and Ken McMillan, owner of the Mountain Refrigeration Co. of Ben Lomond.

The two businessmen said they will cooperate with the State Division of Fish and Game in restoring the ecology of the stream.

Misdemeanor charges against the men were filed by District Attorney Peter Chang under Section 5650 of the State Fish and Game code. It forbids "depositing substances deleterious to fish life in the waters of the state."

No further action except the sentencing is planned in the case, Chang said.

A spokesman for the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board had not heard about the matter until a reporter called the San Luis Obispo

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Creek pollution

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headquarters to inquire about it, but was very interested.

He said that the regional water

quality board does not enter into such accidental (or even wilful) one-time discharges. The board is directly concerned only when continual discharges of pollutants occur in the waters of the state, he said.

Paul and McMillan told the court that they were in the process of changing the Soquel plant's mode of refrigeration from ammonia to freon when the fish-killing discharge occurred.

They reported that the substances were not dumped directly into Soquel Creek, but into a storm drain which emptied into the creek 100 yards away.

Water Pollution