

Bonita Drive Water Project Is Supported

Just when all hope appeared lost to solve the fire protection problem in the so-called ridge area of Rio del Mar, some aid from the Soquel Creek County Water District has been announced.

Spurred by a 75-signature petition from RDM homeowners, Water District directors have agreed the Bonita Drive residents should have priority for new water mains.

Water District Manager Bob Johnson said it is a "good possibility" the 4,000 feet of eight-inch water main could be installed this year. Cost is estimated between \$120,000 and \$140,000.

The homeowners, who showed up some 25 strong to a water board meeting, reminded directors that replacement of the Bonita Drive two-inch mains had been scheduled for last year in the district's 1976 master plan for capital improvements. The board, however, had postponed it since it was looking at the overall ridge area for a possible assessment district to solve the fire-water problem.

Johnson was quick to point out that any Bonita Drive water main improvement will do little to solve the upper ridge area problems for residents along Cuesta, Cresta Vista and upper Vista Del Mar drives. Bonita Drive is in the lower

portion of the ridge and has not been plagued as much by lack of water to fight fires.

The RDM Improvement Association for more than a year attempted to obtain 60 percent of the area residents' signatures on petitions in order to form a special water assessment district. President Melvin Fields reported last month that the effort failed by about 10 percent.

Two ridge area RDM homes were destroyed last year by fire. Inadequate water because of 2½-inch water mains, lack of booster pumps, insufficient number of fire hydrants and a 400-foot elevation were blamed. Fire officials noted that by the time hoses were placed uphill, water came out with little more force than a trickle.

Johnson did add that Encino Drive residents may be helped by the new improvements, due to the addition of four fire hydrants.

Johnson said it could take 25 years for the district to replace some 300,000 feet of four-inch or less water main in the entire area. The only hope for the upper ridge residents, he reiterated, would be for them to form the special water assessment district.