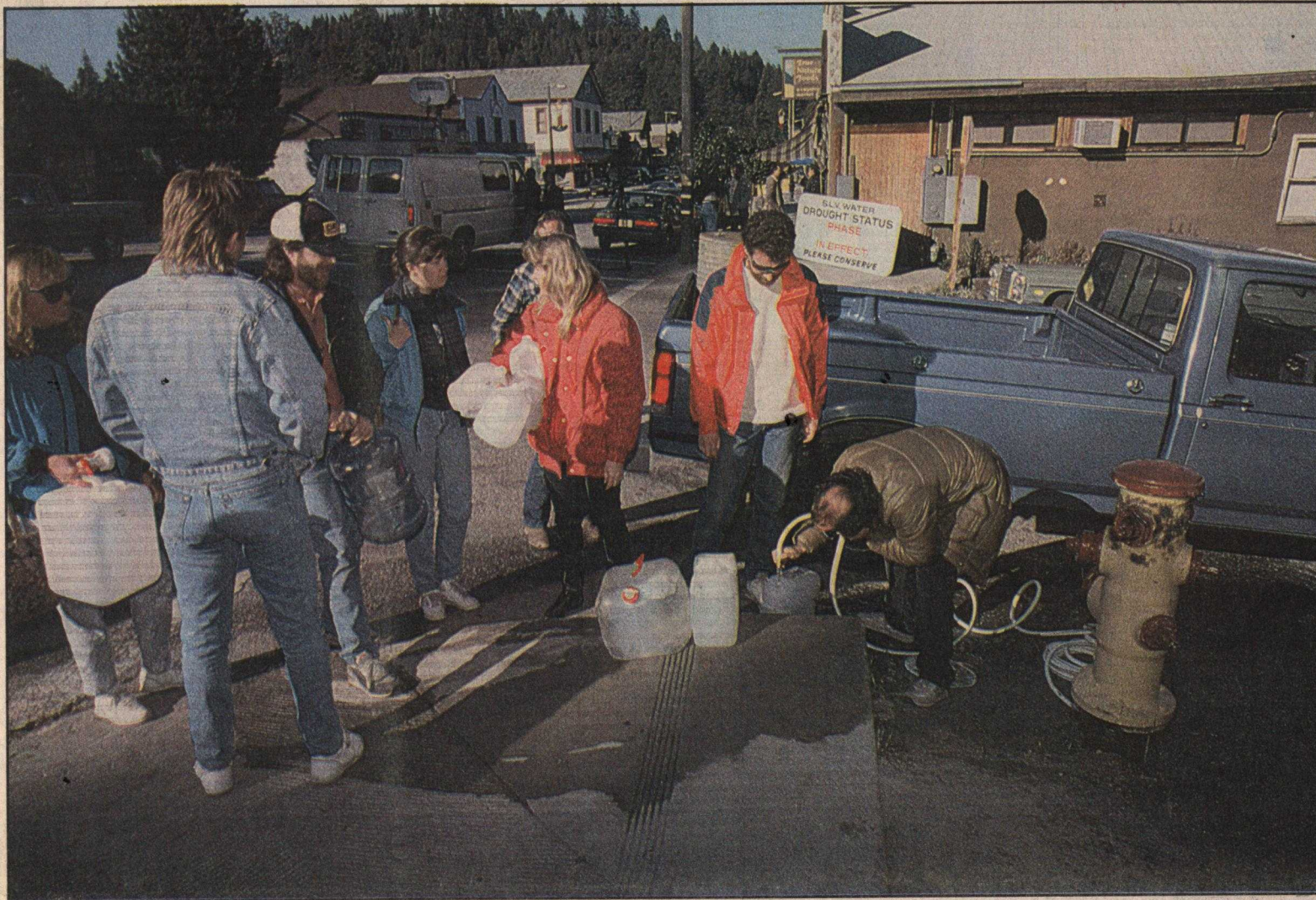


WEATHER Water emergency

12-25-90



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

With the water district running dry, Boulder Creek residents line up to receive water trucked in from Santa Cruz.

Cold ruptures SLV water supply

By MARK BERGSTROM
Sentinel staff writer

BOULDER CREEK — A wide area of the San Lorenzo Valley is without water this Christmas morning. The SLV Water District dripped dry during the five-day deep freeze.

Board President Fred Nitz issued a critical water warning Monday, saying the district's reservoirs were virtually empty and that most of the district's 15,000 customers would be without water for one to two days.

Nitz said the district lost 1,500 gallons per minute from broken pipes and from residents letting their taps drip to prevent them from freezing.

Nitz said some television stations had advised residents to let their faucets drip to keep the pipes from freezing. "That may be what they do in the midwest and east, but we don't have Lake Michigan as a water source. We're in a drought," he said.

Residents who still have water should boil it thoroughly, Nitz said. The rest should boil their water once service has been restored, Nitz said.

The district is trucking in drinking water from Santa Cruz. That water is available at the Ben Lomond Fire Department.

While the San Lorenzo Valley

grapples with its water problem, the rest of the county is also reeling from the effects of the freeze:

- Water from a broken pipe at the Santa Cruz main library caused the ceiling of the upstairs meeting room to collapse;

- Plumbing supply stores are scurrying to get replacement parts to fix the rash of broken water pipes;

- The resources of homeless programs have been stretched thin by the number of people seeking shelter.

Some mountain residents, including Patty Nordquist who lives in a remote area off Highway 236, have been out of water for three days. She hurriedly filled bottles and jugs from a fire hydrant across from the water district.

"My parents are on their way and I can't even flush the toilet. This is one more reason for my dad to tell me to buy a condo," Nordquist said.

Nearby, the chef at the Boulder Creek Brewing Company was carrying in bottled water from the grocery store. McDonald's Market reported selling 2,000 gallons of water by 1 p.m.

Monday.

Brewing Company owners Stephan Wyman and Nancy Long

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Growers total losses; produce prices climb

By KATHY KREIGER
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Farmers, gardeners and produce dealers are still adding up their losses from the record-breaking cold spell, but one thing's for sure: you'll be noticing its effects at the grocery store.

Chas Sneyers, organic produce wholesaler from Watsonville Coast, said the price of leaf lettuce has jumped almost 100 percent from \$10 a case to \$20. Organic romaine lettuce, he said, has gone from \$18 to \$22 a box.

"No one wants to quote on citrus yet," he said. "All the northern California stuff is gone. Even stuff in storage sheds was damaged. The price of organic juife oranges is now \$20 for a 40-pound box. As of today, it's probably going up 30 to 40 percent."

"It's early to say exactly who

lost what. By the end of this week we'll have a better picture."

Scott Wolfram, produce manager of New Leaf Community Market was not caught unprepared by the cold spell.

"I heard the weather report and loaded up on Friday on everything green, plus broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and fennel. I loaded up on citrus, too," said Wolfram.

He said he'll maintain current prices until stocks are exhausted, probably sometime this weekend. He raised the price of romaine lettuce from 89 cents a head to \$1.09 Monday, and "it will go up higher." Wolfram said he'll have to replace some organic produce with commercially-grown.

Joe Curry of Molino Creek Farms said the North Coast organic farm lost approximately

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said they wanted to keep their restaurant open on Christmas Eve, even though it wouldn't be profitable because of the cost of the bottled water.

Long said her own Christmas dinner for 25 friends was in jeopardy. "I'll figure out something. We'll have lots of cheese and things like that and we'll use paper plates."

Boulder Creek Fire Capt. Gil Goode said the state Department of Forestry was providing a water tanker as a supply for fighting fires.

Boulder Creek firefighters said they had responded to structure fires over the weekend.

One was caused by a resident using a lightbulb to warm his pipes to keep them from freezing. But Goode said the resident put the light bulb on top of his woodpile. The wood caught fire and melted a plastic vent pipe, sending the fire inside the wall of the house. The house suffered severe smoke and water damage.

The National Weather Service is calling for temperatures to begin warming up a bit today. Santa Cruz weatherman Ron MacDonald said Monday's low temperature was 23, up from the all-time low of 19 recorded Sunday. Monday's high was 55, five degrees warmer than Sunday.

Boulder Creek hit a low of 17, Sunday night. Even warmer weather won't help the SLV water district. Water that was used up in the reservoirs came primarily from Foreman Creek, and it is running at a trickle because of the drought, Nitz said. He said the district hoped to bring a broken well back on line today so it could start resuming service.

Other residents throughout the county were out of water Monday because of broken water pipes. City Water Director Bill Kocher estimated there had been 200-300 broken pipes in his service area.

"If you needed money, now would be a good time to be a plumber," Kocher said. "But if you want peace, it would not."

A broken pipe caused the ceiling of the upstairs meeting room to collapse at the Santa Cruz main library.

That ceiling had been given a special coating following the 1989



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Teri Stites uses a nearby pool for emergency water supply.

earthquake after damage revealed that asbestos had been used in the ceiling. The coating was designed to keep the asbestos from coming down as dust.

Branch Manager Susan Elgin said experts would be called in Wednesday to oversee repairs. Because the ceiling was brought down by water, there was no danger of asbestos dust, she said.

So many pipes had broken over the weekend that hardware stores were plumb out of plumbing supplies.

Orchard Supply Hardware in Capitola brought in two truckloads of pipes and fittings to try to keep up with demand.

"Business has been brisk. We've spent a lot of time giving advice," said assistant manager Ray Rider.

The freezing temperatures have caused more misery for the homeless, who have flocked to shelters.

Interfaith Satellite Shelter Man-

ager Andrew Morin said more than 100 homeless have sought refuge during the cold snap. The program houses people at area churches and in the National Guard Armory.

"We're pressing our maximum. We've alerted the city and the county," Morin said. The number of people being served is double that of last winter, he said.

The problem, he said, is not space, but a lack of funds. "We don't have the money to pay for food and gas and for the monitors, who we hire from among the homeless," he said.

Volunteers, he said, are needed to help provide meals at the armory. Those willing to help should contact Jim McPherson at 457-1156.

"And we can always use donations," Morin said. Contributions should be sent to the Interfaith Satellite Shelter Program, P.O. Box 3138, Santa Cruz 95063.

Losses

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\$3,000 worth of crops, despite temperatures that "only" dropped to 23.

"We lost a bunch of lettuce, and probably some broccoli and cabbage," said Curry. "Broccoli and cabbage have never been a problem for us before."

Nurseries, too, were hard-hit by the cold.

"This season's got me scared," said Dave Cavanaugh of Watsonville's Cavanaugh Color, which specializes in potted color plants. "We're in danger till April. There's no reason we couldn't have another 20-degree snap."

Cavanaugh said he's lost half his outside inventory and estimated his losses at \$150,000 to \$175,000. By contrast, damage from last year's earthquake was \$50,000, he said.

Cavanaugh said he'll be laying off two-thirds of his 17 workers.

Plants at the UC Santa Cruz Arboretum will probably pull through, but their flowers are severely damaged, according to director Ray Collette.

"It's a terribly serious freeze," said Collette, "but one we're unlikely to see again in our lifetime."

Arboretum staff will use the cold spell as a chance to better assess hardiness levels for their collection of plants from all corners of the globe, Collette said.

He did not expect to lose the arboretum's collection of eucalyptus despite temperatures that dipped lower than the 1972 cold spell which killed back many eucalyptus to the ground, causing a major fire hazard in the Berkeley Hills.

Collette said many plants may suffer later in the year, as fungus and other plant pathogens opportunistically attack the weakened plants. He cautioned gardeners to

Cold tough on birds, too

By KATHY KREIGER

Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — The freeze of the century has broken pipes, destroyed millions of dollars worth of crops, and ruined a lot of people's Christmases this year.

It's also been hard on the county's birds.

"Hummingbirds are pouring in from the surrounding neighborhoods," said Ray Collette, director of the UC Santa Cruz Arboretum. Collette said the freeze has destroyed flowers, which provide the tiny nectar-sippers' main food source.

A dead yellow-and-white songbird was spotted hanging upside down, apparently frozen, on a bush in the UC Santa Cruz Garden Sunday.

Garden manager Orin Martin

said he'd also seen a couple of birds die the previous day, and others were slowed enough that they could almost be caught.

Sandpipers were seen inland on the west side of Santa Cruz and in Live Oak Monday morning, staggering around looking dazed.

Other shorebirds were spotted Monday morning walking on the frozen surface of Corcoran Lagoon.

"Most birds fly around till they find something to eat," said David Suddjian of the Santa Cruz Bird Club.

Suddjian said that residents who have been feeding birds should be sure to continue to put out food through the winter, since birds that might have flown away are now dependent on the food sources.

postpone any pruning back of frost-damaged foliage till later in the spring, saying that the dead foliage will insulate the plants now.

Chris Totten of the San Lorenzo Lumber Garden Center on River Street said they lost between \$4,000 and \$5,000 worth of plant materials, mostly brightly-colored plants like cyclamen, azaleas and Christmas cactus.

He said the nursery has done "brisk sales on frost blankets and anti-transpirants, which is mostly too little too late."

Some plants will benefit from the cold, said Totten. "Fruit trees will get a good chill and roses can go into a full dormancy. Delphiniums,

lilacs, anything that wants a winter rest will probably benefit. As a gardener I take it in stride. We're dealing with living creatures."

County growers were gloomy about the chance of recouping their losses.

County Farm Bureau president Jeff Brothers said "With any luck we'll see the state and/or federal declare it a disaster area. That will help move the machine in that direction. It's not the most encouraging situation."

"It sure is sad," said Brothers. "There's nothing quite like walking around your fields and seeing them so beat up by Mother Nature."