

Conservation Could Begin At Home In Santa Cruz Area

By Robert E. Burton

March 7 to 14 is Conservation Week in California. The event was heralded as usual, by several proclamations, resolutions and petitions addressed mostly to the other fellow, and attempts to set aside public funds to do what each one of us should do individually.

Santa Cruz, because of its natural beauties, has endeared itself to the white man ever since Portola discovered it in 1769 and to the Indians before him. Not only because of its climate, but for its natural setting at the confluence of rivers, forests, foothills and the ocean.

Early settlers nestled among its trees, made paths which later turned into streets. Five of these paths met at what is now the Plaza, to the annoyance of future generations.

Up to the turn of this century, the early settlers had cut many of the native trees, but had in a way redeemed themselves by lining their streets with such trees as: walnuts, sycamores, bays, locust, catalpas and elms, for which they named their streets.

Then there was the river. Everyone agreed that it was beautiful, that its native beauty should be conserved and somebody ought to do something about it.

There was the beach, of course. Few cities could boast such an asset at the foot of their main avenue.

Now what has happened and what of the future?

Gradually the street trees are being cut and more of them might be cut if it did not cost \$100 apiece to remove them (that is what it cost the city to remove some forty of them by contract on High street).

Folks don't like to rake dead leaves in the fall, trees interfere with electric transmission lines and this is an age of electricity, but worst of all, this is an age of law suits. And because tree roots will sometimes lift or tilt sidewalks a little, over which stragglers may fall, and start to sue the owner of the trees and because the insurance companies are leagued against such things and falling limbs, the trees find themselves not wanted in their native homes.

As to the river, it has become the rock on which many hopes of beautification have been shattered. No one can be found to oppose its beautification but neither can any one be found to do it. The best the city has been able to do is build a few levees in its lower reaches, levees that are neither adequate nor beautiful; and to cut and remove some trees along its course to speed it on its way as if we were ashamed of it. This cost to the city over \$10,000 for the fiscal year 1952-53 alone.

The main stumbling block is legal in character and no city council can legitimately spend funds for river beautification until the courts have decided as to who owns the river. The earliest maps show all property lines stopping at the river. Then came other surveys which apportioned land straight across the river. But also came the Act of 1870 passed by the state legislature determining the boundaries of the San Lorenzo as being 300 feet wide or 150 feet on each side of the center.

Briefly stated the problem is this: If the city owns a strip 300 feet wide (as the reservation clauses on insured titles in that area seem to indicate) then it can go ahead and beautify and improve its river front. If the land is privately owned, it is up to the owners to do it. For the city to purchase that land would be so expensive as to be prohibitive, nor would it be right to spend genuine tax funds to enhance the property values of a few.

As to the ocean front, there again we have difficulties. Who owns it and where the front line is, no one seems to know for certain. The city spends \$4000 a year to clean the beach (1952-53 report). Private owners like the Seaside company claim they spend a still larger amount. Let us assume a total of \$10,000 a year. Al-

Conservation Week Co-operation By All Is Sought

Acting State Forester Francis H. Raymond and U. S. Regional Forester Clare Hendee have urged all persons to take an active part in the observation this week of California Conservation week.

"Every person has a stake in conservation," they said in a joint statement, "and should take inventory to determine what each can do to use wisely the natural resources so necessary to the continued welfare of California."

An example of this, they observed, is the part each citizen can play in the prevention of forest fires. Fire, they emphasized, is the greatest threat to the forest, watershed, and range lands of the state, and nine out of ten forest fires that start in California are man-caused.

Cooperating forest fire fighting forces of federal, state, county, and private industry are preparing now for the critical summer fire period just ahead. "Forest fire prevention, to be effective," they said, "must also be cooperative and must include every Californian as a member of the team."

Conservation week is sponsored throughout the state by the California Conservation council. Government and private organizations annually cooperate with the council in an effort to emphasize the importance of conservation as a year-round program.

though some of that cleaning consists in removing kelp, on the other hand, much of it is removing trash left by human beings, who come here to enjoy a clean beach, but leave it dirty. At \$10,000 a year this means \$200.00 a weekend to remove what every citizen who uses the beach should feel proud to do himself.

What a field there is for conservation right here in Santa Cruz and how very vital to the city's very existence! That is unless we wish to reduce it to the level of "plain cities" with more money in their coffers but still greater budgets to be spent on human problems.

God has given us much, but much will be asked of us.