



# County of Santa Cruz 0175

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## PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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ALVIN D. JAMES, DIRECTOR

October 15, 2001

AGENDA: October 23, 2001

Board of Supervisors  
County of Santa Cruz  
701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

## PROGRESS REPORT ON WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Members of the Board:

On January 26, 1999, your Board accepted a report on Water Resources Management that included consensus Goals, Objectives, and Strategies and an Issues Fact Sheet. As indicated at that time, the Goals, Objectives, and Strategies, and the Issues Fact Sheet were reviewed by the Interagency Water Resources Working Group. This report provides an accounting of progress on addressing the five adopted Goals. To address prior Board directives, this report also contains an update on a draft retrofit ordinance and on a measure to better protect lands designated as primary groundwater recharge areas.

**Goal #1 - Through water conservation, maximizing and sharing existing supplies, and developing new sources, balance available water supply and demand (so that the amount of groundwater pumping is sustainable and there is adequate supply for existing and planned uses, including fisheries, riparian, and other instream uses, minimizing adverse impacts).**

All the principle water agencies in the County with the possible exception of Lompico County Water District, Central Water District, and Citizens Utilities are engaged in a process directed at developing new sources and redistributing existing sources. Most of the major water districts have a firm understanding of the supply and demand imbalance. To address the issue of sustainability, the City of Santa Cruz Water Department, Soquel Creek Water District, Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency, and the City of Watsonville Water Department are in the preliminary stages of evaluating either shared use or shared development of a new supply. These joint discussions focus on either desalination (City of Santa Cruz and Soquel Creek W.D.) or reclamation and reuse (PVWMA, Watsonville and Soquel Creek W.D.)

### Synopsis of Progress or Continuing Areas of Concern

Since January 1999 there is little evidence that any of the water systems in the County have become more balanced. On the positive side, difficulties with independent approaches to water supply planning have led

the coastal water agencies to explore development of shared supplies. County staff continues to encourage development of a regional framework for management of water supplies in the lower San Lorenzo Valley. The recent reorganization of the Santa Margarita Groundwater Basin Advisory Committee is but one indicator of the inherent difficulty in trying to address regional water problems that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

There are no active discussions of shared water use amongst the water districts in the San Lorenzo Valley. The City of Scotts Valley and the Scotts Valley Water District, however, have recently received permission to implement the use of tertiary recycled water to meet irrigation demands in their community.

Meetings of the Interagency Water Resources Working Group continue to be a good forum for discussion by staff of the various water districts. The Working Group has not generally addressed matters of regional policy.

**Goal #2 - In the next 5-10 years, maintain existing summer stream baseflow at current levels; in the next 10-20 years, implement strategies to maximize summer baseflow.**

County staff is collaborating with other agencies to document declines in stream baseflow. The problem statement is that *as groundwater levels have declined, less groundwater is available to sustain surface water in the dry months*. The continuum of this problem is that surface water resources decline as they infiltrate through the bottom of the stream channel. Difficulties arise as the need for water districts to develop surface water resources has to compete with various resource agencies need to enhance surface water systems for anadromous fish.

Synopsis of Progress or Continuing Areas of Concern

Additional years of data collection are needed to adequately analyze the problem and characterize the influence of weather and riparian vegetation versus groundwater withdrawals and surface water diversions. Staff is currently collaborating on data collection activities in the San Lorenzo River, Soquel and Aptos Creeks. Strategies are being developed to address declines in baseflow in these watersheds.

**Goal #3 - Within the next 10 years, stabilize or reduce seawater intrusion rates; within the next 20 years stabilize seawater intrusion fronts.**

At present, this goal is almost exclusively a management problem for the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PVWMA). The present problem affects coastal pumpers who rely on the Aromas red sands aquifer. The PVWMA has released a Draft Revised Basin Management Plan (August 2001) which presents strategies for balancing the groundwater basin and eliminating seawater intrusion in the Pajaro Valley groundwater basin.

Four separate basin management strategies are presented in the Draft Revised Basin Management Plan. All four of these strategies favor restrictions on coastal pumping. Each strategy requires the delivery of water to the area where pumping of groundwater would be restricted. A preferred alternative and an implementation plan for the preferred alternative will not be presented until the public review of the Draft Revised Basin Management Plan is completed next month. Staff is in the process of reviewing the revised plan and will bring a detailed analysis to your Board on or before December 11, 2001.

### Synopsis of Progress or Continuing Areas of Concern

The revised plan will likely have policy implications for the PVWMA. If the preferred alternative includes an import pipeline, the Agency will have to overcome the obstacles of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, Measure D, and Measure K. The Agency is preparing for a March referendum to raise the cap on Augmentation Fees which was restricted by the passage of Measure D. The timely implementation of the preferred alternative, whatever it is, (and the goal of stabilizing and reducing seawater intrusion), is predicated upon the successful passage of the March referendum.

**Goal #4 - Prevent any further degradation of water quality by pollution of surface water, groundwater, or marine waters; within the next 10 years, eliminate sources of pollution so that all water quality standards are met.**

Your Board also received in this agenda packet a Status Report on MTBE and Groundwater Pollution including a preliminary report, **An** Overview of Efforts for Aquifer and Wellhead Protection and Cleanup of Groundwater Contamination in Santa Cruz County. The overview addresses the prevention of water quality degradation through wellhead protection programs and through the Drinking Water Source Assessment and Protection program. Eliminating the sources of pollution can prove complex as illustrated by either the case of Santa Cruz Biotechnology or efforts to secure MTBE free gasoline. More emphasis is necessary to protect water quality in water supply watersheds, within wellhead protection zones, and within primary groundwater recharge areas.

### Synopsis of Progress or Continuing Areas of Concern

Two County groundwater areas are presently in need of stronger measures relative to water quality management. Pajaro Valley and the north coast, are presently dominated by irrigated agriculture. In the Pajaro Valley, nitrate concentrations are already elevated in significant portions of the basin. On the north coast, the City of Santa Cruz is exploring an alternative which would allow them to manage groundwater there for municipal demand. Conceptual planning there involves delivering recycled water to irrigation accounts. In all locations, protecting primary groundwater recharge areas against pollution or reductions in permeability is of increasing importance as a preventative measure.

There continues to be a need for the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency to quantify and assess the nitrate problem throughout the Pajaro Valley and to identify primary recharge areas worthy of special management oversight. The County also needs to improve its methods of protection for Primary Recharge Areas. Staff has included in the annual work program a proposal to revise the rural density matrix to include criteria to better protect primary groundwater recharge areas in critical groundwater basins.

**Goal #5- Increase water conservation for all water uses and establish consistent programs for reducing demand by all users (including agriculture and domestic) within a common basin.**

Most of the major water districts and the County have accelerated their conservation efforts. Per capita usage throughout the County is well below the State average in urban service areas. The City of Santa Cruz Water Department has several full time staff dedicated to conservation programs. Soquel Creek Water District has a full time person in public information/Conservation. Others are handling programs with part time efforts of existing staff. A County Resource Planner is coordinating a water conservation sub-committee of the Interagency Water Resources Working Group on a media outreach program. The

program includes full size bus adds on highly visible routes, a website, "[watersavingtips.org](http://watersavingtips.org)", and newspaper ads.

County staff have been coordinating with City of Santa Cruz water conservation staff regarding the preparation of a retrofit upon re-sale ordinance. Sample ordinances from other jurisdictions have been collected for use in putting a proposal together for future policy consideration. Staff will develop a proposed retrofit ordinance for your Board's consideration on the first meeting in March 2002.

#### Synopsis of Progress or Continuing Areas of Concern

The Cities of Santa Cruz and Watsonville have made significant progress retrofitting City owned facilities with state of the art plumbing fixtures. Staff in County General Services are experimenting with waterless and low water using fixtures prior to a larger scale retrofit of older county facilities.

The major water districts differ in the level of conservation programs being pursued due to their varied capacities to provide support. As a result, they are having difficulty achieving the goal to establish consistent programs for reducing demand within a common basin.

Agricultural conservation efforts are largely being addressed through on-farm conservation plans, improved irrigation efficiencies, and in the promotion of agricultural demonstration projects. The City of Watsonville and the **PVWMA** are in the feasibility stage of evaluating the development of tertiary recycled water for use in meeting agricultural demand. Once implemented this effort will reduce groundwater pumping by about 7,000 acre feet/year, an additional 12% reduction in agricultural pumping.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that your Board:

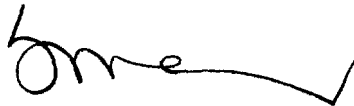
- 1) Accept and file this Progress Report On Water Resources Management;
- 2) Direct Planning staff to report back on or before December 11, 2001 with a detailed analysis of the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency's Draft Revised Basin Management Plan; and
- 3) Direct the Water Resources Manager to provide a Progress Report on Water Resources Management, which will include a draft Retrofit Upon Re-sale Ordinance, on March 5, 2002.

Sincerely,



ALVIN D. JAMES  
Planning Director

RECOMMENDED



SUSAN A. MAURIELLO  
County Administrative Officer

Blc/WRM01-10b

cc: Environmental Health Services  
Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency  
Soquel Creek Water District  
City of Santa Cruz Water Department  
City of Watsonville Public Utilities Department  
Santa Margarita Groundwater Basin Advisory Committee