

Accord guarantees water for Peninsula

By Anne Houghteling

Times Tribune staff

PEN. TIMES 5/16/84
An agreement designed to end discriminatory water rate increases and guarantee water for 30 Peninsula cities and special districts is winning approval after 2½ years of negotiations to end a lawsuit aimed at San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy system.

An out-of-court settlement has been drafted and has been signed by 55 percent of the agencies involved in San Mateo, Santa Clara and Alameda counties. The Redwood City and Menlo Park city councils are the latest signers.

The 25-year agreement establishes standards for determining how much San Francisco may charge 30 suburban cities and special districts for water from the Hetch Hetchy system. The agreement also guarantees that each city and district will get as much water as need up to a pre-set maximum amount.

Under terms of the agreement, the earliest that a rate increase might be considered would be July 1985, when a 3 to 5 percent increase would be authorized if users and the San Francisco suppliers agree. If costs of supplying the water rise or fall, the contract provides that both sides review the facts and decide how to apportion costs.

According to the agreement, water rates would be based on the actual costs of delivery to the suburban users. The agreement ensures the rates will be determined independently of San Francisco rates and costs and gives the suburban users some involvement in the rate-setting process.

Rates will be calculated separately for each agency involved, based on the type of water system operated. The amount of water guaranteed would be based on how much each community used in 1981. Every three years that amount would be adjusted to fit current needs.

Communities involved in the settlement include Palo Alto, Redwood City, Menlo Park, Stanford University, Mountain View, Sunnyvale, San Jose and Hayward. The Belmont, East Palo Alto, Purissima Hills and Los Trancos water districts are among the special districts involved in the settlement.

The agreement will settle a 1974 lawsuit pending in U.S. District Court charging San Francisco with setting "discriminatory" water rates for its suburban customers. The suit, in which Palo Alto was the original plaintiff, was filed after San Francisco decided to

raise suburban water rates 20.5 percent while raising rates for city customers 14.5 percent.

The out-of-court settlement was drafted last month, and the city's suburban water customers are reviewing it, according to Warren Mitchell, general manager of the Belmont Water District and head of the Bay Area Water Users, a coalition of San Francisco water customers.

Mitchell said it is hoped BAWU members will sign the settlement by the end of this month. It would then be forwarded to the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission for approval. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors must give final approval, but the board has already endorsed the agreement in principle.

Mitchell said today that all Hetch Hetchy users involved in the pact have been asked to review and make a decision on the agreement by May 25. No community agency has yet notified Mitchell that the pact will not be signed, he said.

The Redwood City Council approved it Monday, but council members voiced concern about whether Redwood City will receive enough water under the settlement to accommodate growth over the next 25 years.

The settlement will provide the cities and water districts with a maximum of 184 million gallons of water

a day. They now receive about 144 million gallons a day from San Francisco, according to Redwood City Public Works Director Frank Addiego.

Redwood City initially is guaranteed about 9 million gallons a day. Water customers' rates will be reviewed periodically, and their water allocation will be adjusted according to their water usage, according to Redwood City Attorney David Schricker.

Schricker said, "Inherent in this settlement is that, one, we have a limited supply of water ... and, two, that the agreement actually encourages rapid consumption of water" by basing the amount of water a customer will receive in the future on past consumption.

Addiego estimated Redwood City will need 7 million gallons a day more by 2003 to serve the 40,000 additional residents expected to live in the city by then. On a suggestion by Vice Mayor Priscilla Mosher, the city's representative on the BAWU, the council decided to explore the possibility of doing a study to determine the city's future water needs.

The Menlo Park City Council also approved the agreement.

"Even though this agreement is not perfect, it is a vast improvement over what we had previously," Director of Public Works Lauren Mercer said.

"All of the economic goals we set out to achieve have been accomplished."

Staff writers Barbara Wood and Mary Madison contributed to this report.

Where Peninsula cities get their water

Most people in Santa Clara County receive some of their tap water from underground water. The rest of the water comes from the Sacramento River Delta and the Hetch Hetchy reservoir in Yosemite National Park.

Most people in San Mateo County get their water from the Hetch Hetchy, although some people get at least part of their drinking water from creeks and reservoirs in the Woodside area.

The water is delivered by municipal utilities and private water companies, which buy most of their water from wholesale water districts, such as the Santa Clara Valley Water and San Francisco Water districts.

Here is a breakdown of where each city gets its water, as provided by the state Department of Health Services. It also includes the most recent average measure of the water's trihalomethanes (THMs), a suspected carcinogen sometimes formed when chlorine injected into the water to kill viruses interacts with decaying vegetation and other organic matter. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has set an upper limit of 100 parts of THMs allowed in a billion gallons of water on an average day. The cities sample the THM content every every three months:

Sunnyvale

Municipal water company buys water from three sources: The San Francisco Water District's Hetch Hetchy water, the Santa Clara Valley Water District and 10 city wells, all of which are active and supply water to homes. Average THMs: 73 parts per billion (ppb).

Cupertino

Municipal water company supplies a small portion of drinking water, which it buys from the Santa Clara Valley Water District. Most of the water is provided by the San Jose Water Works and the California Water Service, two private companies that get their water from the Santa Clara Valley Water District and their own wells. Average THMs (municipal water company only): 60 ppb.

Los Altos

The California Water Service supplies all of the water, which it gets from the Santa Clara Valley Water District and its own wells. Average THMs: 67 ppb.

Los Altos Hills

The Purissima Hills Water District, a public water district, buys Hetch Hetchy water only. No THMs reported — too small to be required to monitor.

Mountain View

Municipal water company buys mostly Hetch Hetchy water but also pumps water from three of five wells it owns. Average THMs: 20 ppb.

Palo Alto

Municipal water company buys only Hetch Hetchy water and owns wells that are maintained for emergency use. Average THMs: 60 ppb.

Menlo Park

Municipal water company buys Hetch Hetchy. Average THMs: 57 ppb.

Other parts of city get water from the privately owned California Water Service, Bear Gulch Division, which gets its water

from surface watershed that runs off from Skyline and Wunderlich Park to Huddart Park and by way of Bear Gulch Creek to Bear Gulch Reservoir. Average THMs: 68 ppb.

Atherton, Portola Valley/Woodside

All three towns get their water from the privately owned California Water Service, Bear Gulch Division. Average THMs: 68 ppb.

Redwood City

Municipal water company buys Hetch Hetchy water. Average THMs: 72 ppb.

San Carlos

Privately owned California Water Service, San Carlos Division, buys Hetch Hetchy water. Average THMs: 97 ppb.

Belmont

The public Belmont County Water District buys Hetch Hetchy water. Average THMs: 63 ppb.

Foster City

The public Estero Municipal Improvement District buys Hetch Hetchy water. Average THMs: 72 ppb.

East Palo Alto

Three water companies supply water. The East Palo Alto Water District, run by San Mateo County, is the largest and buys Hetch Hetchy water. Averages THMs: 70 ppb THMs. The Palo Alto Park Mutual, a private company, gets its water from five wells and serves the neighborhood between Willow Road and Cooley Avenue along Addison Avenue. The private O'Connor Tract Water Co. has two wells. No THMs reported from the two smaller districts.

Water rates heading up

in Belmont
 APRIL 22, 1984
 BELMONT — Belmont County

Water District rates will increase 12.4 percent as of Aug. 1, or an average of 71 cents a month for most homeowners, according to General Manager Warren Mitchell.

The five-member board of directors voted unanimously Thursday to raise the rates as the second half of a package aimed at financing a six-year \$3.4 million capital improvements project.

Mitchell said the board rejected a 32 percent increase a year ago in favor of 18 percent then and 12.4 percent this year. The increase is expected to produce \$165,000 this year, which, with reserves, will be used for a \$700,000 project replacing water mains and maintaining district facilities.

The increase was part of the board adoption of a \$1.65 million budget for 1984-85. The district has 7,260 residential and commercial customers in Belmont, the Buckland portion of San Carlos and the harbor industrial district along the Bayshore Freeway to Holly Street.

In some Belmont neighborhoods

Warning: Don't drink well

BELMONT — Homeowners in the eastern neighborhoods of this city are being warned not to drink any water from private wells while county health officials continue to monitor the levels of contaminants in ground water.

The ban on drinking water from private wells went into effect in June after officials discovered that approximately 15,000 gallons of gasoline had leaked out of an underground tank at a service station at the corner of Ralston Avenue and Old County Road.

Since then, officials have periodically checked the water in 27 wells scattered throughout the Homeview and Sterling Downs neighborhoods. Contaminants such as benzene, toluene and xylene (all constituents of gasoline) have continued to show up in several of the wells, said Judith Henley, manager of the Hazardous Materials Program in the San Mateo County Office of Environmental Health.

Some wells also contain trichloroethylene, tetrachloroethylene and ethylene dibromide, all of which are common components

of industrial solvents, Ms. Henley added.

Because traces of the contaminants continue to show up, workers are distributing leaflets to homes in the area, once again warning residents against drinking local well water, she said.

Ms. Henley noted that as long as residents don't drink from wells "there is no immediate health threat in the area."

She added, "The Regional Water Quality Control Board is working closely with the South County Fire District and the San Mateo County Health Depart-

ment to keep track of the problem."

The gasoline leak under the service station was discovered last June after a nearby resident reported gasoline odors in his well. "Further investigation revealed an underground tank lost approximately 15,000 gallons of gasoline in late February and early March," according to Ms. Henley.

After the gasoline leak was discovered, workers managed to recover more than 400 gallons of gasoline which was siphoned off well waters in the area.

Water Rate Increased

CARL END 8/1/84
San Carlos and Belmont residents will see a 12.4 percent increase in their monthly water bill beginning August 1.

The rate increase was approved by the Board of Directors of the Belmont Water District last Thursday evening as part of the 1984-85 budget and comes one year after an 8 percent rate increase for area users.

Water District General Manager and Secretary Warren Mitchell said the combined increase of 30.4 percent was instituted to help fund the

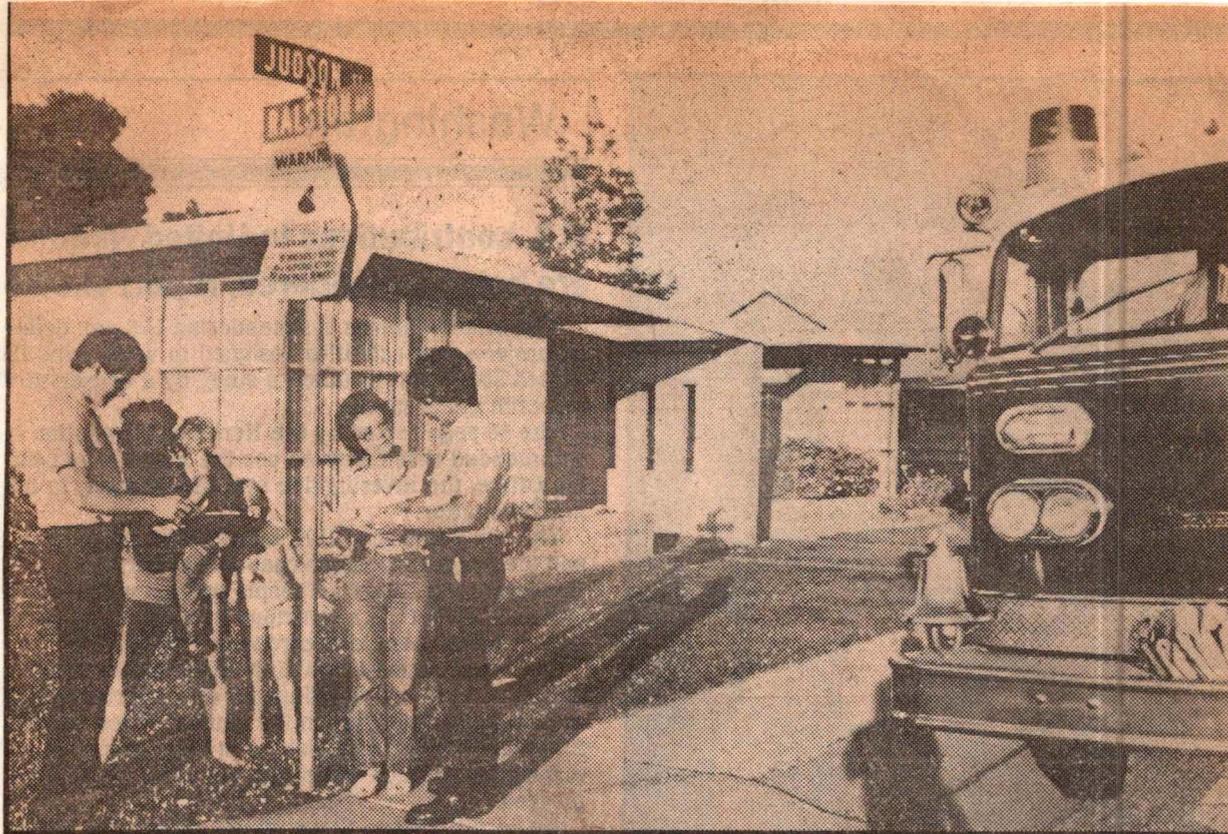
District's six-year capital improvements program.

Amounting to an average increase of \$1.71 in monthly water bills, the rate change will result in a funding increase of \$1.652 million over the next fiscal year.

"The rate increase," said Mitchell, "is an effort to avoid a bond issue or a special assessment district."

Included in the capital improvement program, said Mitchell, will be the replacement of water mains and the maintenance of steel water tanks in the district.

water



Times Tribune photo by Victor Volfo

County firefighters Marty Van Raesfeld (left) and Greg Johnson (right) warn residents of the seven-block Sterling Downs neighborhood in Belmont to stop using their irrigation wells. Monday's warning came after one well was found to be contaminated with gasoline. Here, the firefighters are handing out warnings to Shelly Capone (left) and Angie Lepe (right). *PEN. TIMES 6/19/84*

Gasoline found in Belmont well

By Ruthann Richter

Times Tribune staff

PEN. TIMES 6/19/84
About 250 residents in the Sterling Downs area of Belmont are being warned to stop using well water supplies because of a discovery Monday of extremely high concentrations of gasoline in a private irrigation well.

South County firefighters canvassed a seven-block area Monday night and this morning, handing out notices warning of the potential gasoline hazard. Fire Capt. Steve Gast said one irrigation well has been found to have as much as one quart of refined gasoline floating on the top. Test results from other irrigation wells were expected shortly.

Fire Inspector Sally Ortega said Monday's survey of privately owned wells was limited to the Sterling Downs area.

"We're just beginning to open the

can of worms," she said.

Ortega said it is believed none of the wells is used for drinking, though they may be used to water lawns and gardens. Any resident using the tainted water to nurture his garden might notice a browning or yellowing of the grass, she said.

"Because it is not domestic water, I don't feel there is any immediate health problem," Ortega said.

Despite the gas discovery, Ortega also believes there is little potential for explosions or fires that could endanger surrounding houses.

"The danger is not as great as if the gas were on the surface, but you obviously don't want people to water their lawns with gasoline," she said.

If the tainted wells were to be ignited, there would be a localized explosion in the well and a gradual



Carlos Velazquez ... complained to fire officials.

(Cont. on BACK)

wells tested on Tuesday did not contain gasoline.

The fire authority tested the first well Monday when a resident at 1020 Furlong St., Carlos Velazquez, complained that he could smell gasoline in his backyard well.

A check showed that the first "2 or 3 feet of that well was full of gasoline," Fire Inspector Sally Ortega said.

Gasoline was found floating on the top of water in the well again on Tuesday and it smelled strongly of gasoline, Gast said.

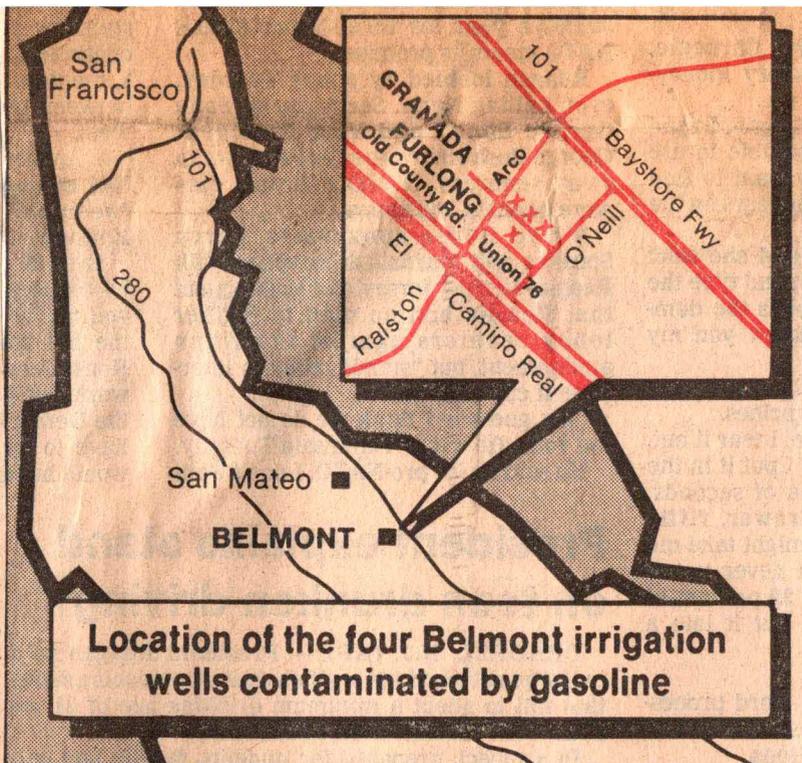
The gasoline was more diluted in the three other wells, but Gast said that may have been because Velazquez had not used his well in two years and because it was capped.

Gast expects results to be ready by Friday from the tests at the Union 76 station and at the Arco gas station. If one or both of the stations is responsible for the gas leak, the authority will require them to prepare a clean-up plan. The company responsible for the gasoline leak also will be required to pay for the cleanup, according to the hazardous materials ordinance adopted by the cities of Belmont and San Carlos.

A company that refuses to clean up the gas can be fined up to \$500 a day for every day it does not comply with the ordinance, Gast said.

The last time the South County Fire Authority found gasoline in water was two years ago when gas escaped from underground tanks at a service station on Holly Street, just off the Bayshore Freeway. The gas leaked into the sewer system and was found coming up in toilets in the neighborhood, Gast said.

The service station's underground tanks since have been replaced and the station has a new owner.



Location of the four Belmont irrigation wells contaminated by gasoline

Times Tribune graphic by Elizabeth S. Lada

Map shows well sites, service stations in area.

Three more Belmont wells contaminated by gasoline

By Ann Gibbons

Times Tribune staff

PEN. THES 6/22/84

High levels of gasoline were found in three more private wells in Belmont Tuesday, bringing to four the total number of wells contaminated with fuel, South County Fire Authority officials said.

Water officials Tuesday also began their search for the source of the gasoline leak by taking samples of fuel at two service stations near the affected neighborhood.

Fire Capt. Steve Gast said today

that one of the stations — the Union 76 station at Old County Road at Ralston Avenue — had reported a leak in one of its underground tanks in March. The station replaced both of its gas tanks with new lined tanks within a week of detecting the leak and now monitors them regularly, Gast said.

The other service station where tests were taken was the Arco station at the corner of Ralston Avenue and Granada Street.

(cont)

burning off of the gasoline, she said. "My concern is that we are entering fireworks season, when kids are out of school. You don't know what could happen," she said. The problem came to light Monday when a resident at 1020 Furlong St. complained to the fire department about possible gasoline contamination in his backyard well, the fire inspector said. A

check showed that the "first 2 or 3 feet of that well was full of gasoline," she said. The petroleum odor was "readily noticeable," she said. Ortega said the resident, Carlos Velazquez, told her he had not used the well water in two years, though he had used it previously to water his lawn. The incident sent groups of firefighters into the neighborhood to distribute flyers warning residents to check their wells for gasoline products. Residents also were told to discontinue use of all wells and cover them with plywood. The area covered is bounded by

Ralston Avenue, Elmer Street, O'Neill Street and Kedith Street, Ortega said. There are 150 to 200 homes in the area, she said. The fire department has contacted the San Mateo County Environmental Health Department and the San Francisco Bay Area Regional Water Quality Control Board about the contamination. The agencies were expected to begin searching today for the source of the contamination. Ortega said the source is unknown. Staff writer Grant Willis contributed to this report.

Firefighters will compare the fuel from the two service stations with the gas from the contaminated wells to see if they have the same fingerprint," Gast said. If the fuel matched to one of the service stations, then wells will be drilled at the gas station to see if the fuel is leaking from underground tanks.

The discovery of the fuel in the three new wells Tuesday ruled out the possibility that the first well tested Monday could have been contaminated by gasoline poured in from the top. The contamination of the four wells in one block indicated that ground water was tainted with gasoline, Gast said.

Firefighters Tuesday continued warning the 250 residents of the seven-block neighborhood south of Ralston Avenue between the Bayshore Freeway and El Camino Real to stop using the well water. All of the homes in the region are hooked up to the municipal water district for drinking water, but some residents have used private wells for watering their lawns and gardens and for other household purposes.

There is no estimate of the number of private wells in the neighborhood because many of the owners of homes with wells failed to obtain use permits from the San Mateo County Environmental Health Department, Gast said.

The fire authority is relying on telephone calls from residents to determine where wells are so the authority and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board can test the wells for contamination. Only one of the five

Solvents found in 3 Belmont wells

By Ann Gibbons
Times Tribune staff

PEN-TIMES 8/24/84
Toxic solvents as well as gasoline have polluted three private wells in Belmont, San Mateo County health officials said in letters mailed to Belmont residents today.

The solvents trichloroethylene and tetrachloroethylene were found at levels higher than recommended by the state Health Department. The tests were taken of water in nine private wells and in shallow aquifers after a resident on Furlong Street smelled gasoline in

his backyard well on June 18.

The source of the solvents has yet to be found, said Judith Henley, manager of the hazardous materials program in the environmental health division of the San Mateo

County Health Department.

The gasoline, however, probably came from a gas station where 14,200 gallons leaked from an underground storage tank, said Peter Johnson, a water resources engineer with the Bay Area Regional Water Quality Control Board.

The gas leak was discovered in March at Union 76, 699 Ralston Ave., but fire, health and water agency officials did not know it had spread to three nearby private wells until Carlos Velazquez smelled gas in his backyard well at 1020 Furlong St. in June.

Subsequent investigations found that the water in the three shallow wells and the ground water nearby was contaminated with the solvents and with benzene, toluene, xylene and ethylene dibromide, which are constituents of gasoline.

The information from laboratory tests of the water was included in letters mailed today to the residents of the Homeview and Sterling Down neighborhoods. The county health department's letters follow warnings to 250 residents of the area in June not to drink or cook with the well water after the initial discovery of the gas.

Capt. Steve Gast of the South County Fire Authority said the shallow private wells had been used only for irrigation and not for drinking water by residents of the neighborhood, which is located in a seven-block area south of Ralston Avenue between the Bayshore Freeway and El Camino Real.

The first tests of the private wells this summer found "pure gas" floating on top of the ground water near the Union 76 gas station, Johnson said.

The leaking gas tank was removed and replaced with a new, Fiberglas tank in March as soon as the leak was detected, but not before the 14,200 gallons of gasoline had leaked from the corroded gas tank, said Anna Ngow, wife of the owner of the Union 76 station.

The regional water board had asked the couple to test the ground water near their station for traces of the gas, but the process was accelerated after the fuel was found in nearby private wells.

Although water board and fire officials knew about the Union 76 leak, they at first were reluctant to name it as the source of the gas in the wells until they had laboratory tests to prove the gas was the same in the wells as the fuel that leaked from the station. Old gasoline also was found in the soil surrounding gas tanks at the Arco gas station at the corner of Ralston and Hiller Avenue, where leaks of gasoline also have been reported in the past.

Johnson, however, said the probable source of the gas in the private wells is the Union 76 station, because the gas has been found in ground water in monitoring wells surrounding the station. The private wells and the monitoring wells have been sampled weekly (except at Arco) since late June to measure the contamination, Henley said.

The leak at the Union 76 was caused after the 15-year-old steel gas tank at the station rusted, Ngow said.

The corrosion of old steel gasoline tanks is a "major problem," Gast said.

The acidic soil on the Peninsula and the salt water that often intrudes into the ground water rust and erode the steel tanks, Gast said. Many of those tanks were installed more than 15 years ago and now are in danger of leaking.

As a result, the South County Fire Authority (as well as most other cities on the Peninsula) this

year began requiring owners of underground tanks to drill monitoring wells near steel tanks to check for toxic chemicals or gasoline leaks.

If a leak is found, the steel tanks must be removed and replaced with Fiberglas tanks or with steel tanks that are surrounded by cement walls or wrapped with Fiberglas — as was done at the Union 76 station.

Johnson also is compiling a survey of all of the cases on the Peninsula where gasoline has leaked from underground tanks.

The gasoline that leaked at the Union 76 tank now is being cleaned up, but the work cannot be completed until the full extent of the contamination is known, Johnson said.

The gas station owners are scheduled to give the regional water board a report on Sept. 7, describing the extent of the contamination and proposing ways to clean up the entire leak. Johnson and other local officials plan to meet with the Ngows to plan the cleanup soon after receiving that report.

The regional water board also still is requiring tests of the gasoline at other nearby gas stations, including monitoring at the Arco station, to see if any of them may have contributed to the leak. About six gas stations are located in the neighborhood.

The South County Fire Authority tested his well after Velazquez complained that he could smell gasoline in the well, which he had not used in two years.

Subsequent tests found gasoline floating in two other private wells on Granada Street.

Fire officials then warned the residents of the neighborhood that week to stop using the water in their wells for drinking or cooking.

They then referred the case to the county health department and the regional water board, which already had required the Ngows to find the extent of the gas leak.

Belmont Blues Over Water Contamination

By Steven Stark *5/23/84*

Although ultimate responsibility for gasoline found in three Belmont irrigation wells has not been determined, cleanup continues, according to South County Fire officials who are in charge.

A total of 13 wells in the Homeview area, bounded by O'Neil Street, Ralston Avenue and Elmer to Miller Street, have been tested, according to Sally Ortega, South County Fire inspector.

One contaminated well has been found on the 1000 block of Furlong Street while the other two are on Hiller Street, according to Ortega.

The remaining 10 wells are being monitored weekly for the presence of dissolved gasoline contamination. In addition, monitoring wells have been dug in the area to pinpoint the extent and travel route of the contamination, according to Regional Water Quality Control Board officials.

PETRO-PURGE

The Union 76 gas station has been pumping water from the area to separate the gasoline out of the water, according to Peter Johnson of the Regional Water Quality Control Board in Oakland. This cleanup process is called "petro purge" Johnson said. The separated water is then discharged into the sanitary sewer water treatment process, Johnson said.

Johnson said final test results comparing gasoline from the Union 76 gas station and a nearby Arco station won't be completed until next week, but preliminary comparisons between the gas found in the three Belmont wells and that of Union 76 "Appears to be Union 76's."

In March, Union 76 reported an underground gasoline tank leak of 4,000 gallons. This tank has since been replaced and monitoring wells placed on Elmer Street originally showed no evidence of contamination,

tion, Johnson said. However, there appears to be a plume of gasoline from the station across Elmer Street.

"At first (in March) we didn't think the leak would affect the private residents in the area," Johnson said.

"At this time, we don't feel there is an imminent threat to the drinking water in the area nor an immediate threat to the water table below" Johnson said.

SEEPAGE

Because gasoline tends to float to the top, Johnson said, seepage into the water table below the contamination will generally occur at a slower rate. This "percolation effect" where contaminants seep into the water table below, is affected by geological conditions as well. These geological conditions include cracks in the bedrock, distance of the water table to the contamination and sudden land shifts, according to a Union 76 geologist who asked not to be named.

"When the gasoline dissolves, then it can percolate down," the geologist said.

Johnson said there appears to be no threat to public safety at this time. Since the discovery of the first contaminated well in mid-

June, about 250 residents were hand-delivered warnings against using their water and advised to report the presence of backyard wells in the area to South County officials. Residents were also advised to cap their wells to reduce the chance of accidental fires, according to Ortega.

HEALTH CONCERNS

County health officials were concerned some of these wells were connected to the municipal drinking water supply. Of the 13 wells identified in the area, none were connected, according to Rex Goff of the San Mateo County Health Department.

Goff said residents in the area who wished to hook their house and well to the municipal water supply would have a difficult, if not impossible, task because the water pressure in the neighborhood is usually high. The problem with mixing well water with domestic water, Goff said, arises when the pressure inside the house is greater than that of city pressure. This creates a backflow, which can allow anything contained in the well water to mix with the municipal water, including any and all contaminants, Goff said.

Goff said the county health department's concern is in identi-

fying all wells in the neighborhood should future need arise. None of the 13 wells in the neighborhood were known to the department prior to this incident, Goff said.

South County Fire officials continue to request residents in the area notify them if they have a backyard well.

Water rate pact ends long fight

S.F. TIMES 9/29/84

BELMONT — A decade of legal battles between the San Francisco Water Department and its suburban customers over wholesale water rates has come to an end, officials announced Friday.

Warren Mitchell, general manager of the Belmont County Water District, hailed the new agreement as an important milestone for suburban water users. "With a guaranteed supply and with a voice in determining rate structure and water cost, our suburban customers will achieve significant benefits from the agreement," said Mitchell, who is also president of the Bay Area Water Users Association.

Officials from 31 Bay Area water jurisdictions met here Thursday night to celebrate the completion of the formal pact that affects 1.5 million Bay Area water users.

The agreement between San Francisco and its suburban customers calls for a uniform 25-year master water sales contract running through June 30, 2009. A formula has been established to standardize wholesale water rates set by San Francisco for its suburban water customers.

With the signing of the agreement, the suburban water users agreed to dismiss their lawsuit against San Francisco. The suit claimed that suburban agencies had been historically overcharged for water received from San Francisco.

San Francisco, in turn, aban-

doned its claim that it had previously undercharged suburban water users and was now entitled to a surcharge to recover revenue shortages.

Under the pact, San Francisco will continue to improve its water system in order to maintain high-quality water and to meet water demands. In addition, the agreement assures San Francisco that the suburban users will pay a proportionate share of operating and capital costs, plus a fair rate of return on San Francisco's investments.

San Francisco Water Department has sold water from its Hetch Hetchy system to suburban customers on a wholesale basis for 54 years.

The suburban customers, represented by the Bay Area Water Users Association, make up 30 water agencies in San Mateo, Alameda and Santa Clara counties.

Other sections of the new agreement call for development of a joint water conservation plan and require "good-faith negotiations" aimed at agreement upon methods for allocating water during times of drought and water shortage.

Under the new pact, a suburban advisory group will meet twice yearly with senior management of the San Francisco Water Department to discuss matters of mutual concern, including future system development.

Local Firms Hit By

EPA On Water Law

CARL ENP 7/11/84
Two Belmont and two San Carlos companies received administrative orders by the Environmental Protection Agency last Thursday (July 5) for dumping toxic wastes into sewer systems.

Companies cited were Circraft, Inc., and Circuits Eleven, Inc., both of Belmont, and Artec Electronics and Associated Circuits, both located on Old County Road, San Carlos.

The companies are among 32 Peninsula firms ordered to comply with a federal law which requires them to treat toxic wastes before draining them into sewers. The companies must comply with the law by July 27.

Ten-year water dispute ends

CARL ENP 10/13/84

Nearly 10 years of federal court litigation was brought to an end last week when 31 Bay Area water jurisdictions met in Belmont to celebrate the finalization of an agreement affecting \$1.5 million water users.

Continuing through June of 2009, the agreement is a legal

settlement between the San Francisco Water Department and its suburban wholesale customers (represented by the Bay Area Water Users Association) who make up 30 water agencies on the Peninsula and in Alameda and Santa Clara counties.

In general terms, the agreement establishes a formula to standardize wholesale water rates set by San Francisco, and limits the charges to water-specific expenses.

With the signing of the agreement, both suburban water users and the San Francisco Water Department have dismissed their lawsuits in federal court.

Water customers have claimed to be historically overcharged, while San Francisco Water claimed it had previously undercharged suburban water users and was entitled to a surcharge to cover revenue shortages.

Provisions are now established to permit active participation by suburban water users in budget and rate struc-

ture, but requires that the rates themselves be reasonable and not "unjustly discriminatory" among suburban users.

The entire budgetary process is to be reviewed every year by an independent auditor.

Other sections of the agreement call for the development of a joint water conservation plan and require "good faith negotiations" when determining water allocations during times of drought and shortage.

The contract specifies procedures for arbitration and judicial review if disputes arise.

Warren Mitchell, president of the Bay Area Water Users Association and General Manager of the Belmont County Water District said the new contract is an important milestone for suburban water users.

"With a guaranteed supply, and with a voice in determining rate structure and water cost," Mitchell said, "our customers will achieve significant benefits from the agreement."

Citizens Warned Against Water

CALL. END. 6/27/84
About 250 residents of the Homeview neighborhood in Belmont are being warned not to use well water for irrigation following the discovery of gasoline in four wells last week.

Test results comparing the gasoline found in the wells with gasoline dispensed at area gas stations were not completed by presstime, according to fire officials.

Under Belmont law, the party responsible for the contamination is responsible for its cleanup.

South County Fire Capt. Steve Gast said the fire department was advising all residents of the area to discontinue use of their wells, used solely for irrigation, and to cap the wells to avoid the fumes and fire hazard. Gast said residents should report the existence of any other wells in the neighborhood so they could be checked.

Gast said there was a danger of explosion should the well water be pumped into the plumbing of neighborhood homes. So far only irrigation wells have been found, Gast said.

Fire inspector Sally Ortega said the survey of wells was confined to an area bounded by Ralston Avenue, Elmer Street, O'Neil Street and Kedith Street, a seven-block area in all.

Residents have complained of gasoline fumes and of grass dying after being watered from the wells, Gast said.

The incident began last Monday after Belmont resident Carlos Valazquez complained of gasoline fumes emanating from his well. The first few feet of well water was found to be coated by gasoline at the Furlong Street well, according to South County Fire officials.

Phil Duffy of Regional Water Quality Control said state law mandating the monitoring of underground tanks doesn't go into effect until January 1985 although permits have been required for any new underground tanks since January 1984.

While wells for domestic drinking uses are required to be reported to the San Mateo County health department, Duffy said, many irrigation wells in the neighborhood are never reported.

"It's very hard to find these holes in the ground," Duffy said.

Duffy said the danger of irrigation wells contaminating domestic drinking water supplies comes when these "bootlegged" irrigation wells are hooked up to plumbing or other water sources and thus are mixed.

Duffy said an underground gasoline tank leak was reported in March by the Union 76 station at Ralston Avenue and Old County Road. Some 14,000 gallons of gasoline had leaked before it was replaced, Duffy said.

Tests are also being taken at an Arco station at the corner of Ralston Avenue and Granada Street.

Water Rate Increased

CARL ENO 11/84
San Carlos and Belmont residents will see a 12.4 percent increase in their monthly water bill beginning August 1.

The rate increase was approved by the Board of Directors of the Belmont Water District last Thursday evening as part of the 1984-85 budget and comes one year after an 18 percent rate increase for area users.

Water District General Manager and Secretary Warren Mitchell said the combined increase of 30.4 percent was instituted to help fund the

District's six-year capital improvements program.

Amounting to an average increase of \$1.71 in monthly water bills, the rate change will result in a funding increase of \$1.652 million over the next fiscal year.

"The rate increase," said Mitchell, "is an effort to avoid a bond issue or a special assessment district."

Included in the capital improvement program, said Mitchell, will be the replacement of water mains and the maintenance of steel water tanks in the district.

Gasoline pollution:

Monitor wells help trace neighborhood gas spread

CARL ENO 10/17/84
More than 40 monitoring wells have been dug in the Sterling Downs and Homeview neighborhoods to check the "plume" of gasoline spreading from the Ralston Avenue and Old County Road Union 76 station, according to county health officials.

In addition, three recovery wells have been dug to extract gasoline found in three Belmont irrigation wells, according to Judith Hanley of the Division of Public Safety of the San Mateo County Department of Health Services.

The monitoring and cleanup are the continuing efforts resulting from a March, 1983 gasoline leak of some 14,000 gallons of gasoline from the Union 76 station.

Three Belmont backyard wells have been found to be contaminated by the gasoline product. All wells have been used solely for irrigation purposes and not for drinking water, according to South County Fire Authority officials.

Larry Jaurigui, northern California division manager of Union Oil Company, said

his company is paying for the studies and cleanup effort, although final blame for the gasoline pollution has yet to be determined.

"There are a number of contributing factors to this spill," Jaurigui said, "We've initiated the identification and monitoring of the spill and have given the state our proposal for recovery, but we will be seeking reimbursement later from others who are responsible."

"I hate to allege that other companies are responsible," Jaurigui said, "but we know for a fact that others are equally responsible."

The plume of gasoline, extending from the Union 76 station across Elmer Street, spans more than 1,000 feet, according to Peter Johnson of the Bay Area Regional Water Quality Control Board. The Board is the "lead" agency in the cleanup effort.

Johnson said the gasoline, which floats on top of water (gasoline is lighter than water) is located in the shallow ground water zone, some 10-15 feet below ground level.

Supervisors to face varied agenda in their meeting

S.H. TIMES 11/5/84
REDWOOD CITY — County supervisors Tuesday will consider plans for training displaced workers, including welfare recipients, for cleaning up Belmont Creek and for creating a committee to review building inspection practices.

workers, Martone said. It is to be a continuation of a program begun this past year to help work-

ers laid off by Simpson DuraVent, Qantas Airways and GTE Lenkurt.

The supervisors meet at 9:30 a.m. in the Hall of Justice, 401 Marshall St.

Also on the agenda Tuesday is a follow-up report on the Household Hazardous Waste Clean-out held Oct. 27 at the waste transfer station in San Carlos.

"In recent years, Belmont Creek in the unincorporated Harbor Industrial Area has overflowed and caused damage to private property. These damages have led to claims against the county. As part settlement of one claim, the county is obligated to attempt to reduce or eliminate the flooding condition," Public Works Director Robert Sans said in explaining that an agreement has been reached with property owners to provide a \$57,000 clean-up project.

Supervisors Anna Eshoo and Arlen Gregorio are setting up the ad hoc committee to review building inspection services. It is designed to: Review present building inspection practices under fire from Jim Warren, publisher of the Peninsula Citizens' Advocate; meet with staff to discuss procedures; recommend changes which may be desired.

Walter Martone, acting director of the Employment and Training Division, is to present the Community Services Department's proposals for helping persons laid off by businesses and industries in the county.

The department is asking for authorization to start a \$120,000 welfare reform program. "Staff has designed a program for General Assistance (GA) recipients that has been closely modeled after one successfully operated in Florida," Martone said.

That program, if approved, will be part of an overall \$706,801 program of recruitment, counseling, training, job-search assistance and support for displaced

Council approves increase in

Times Tribune staff

11/6/84
PEN. TIMES
The Redwood City Council Mon-

day night set higher sewer fees for homes and businesses in order to meet the city's share of costs to expand the regional waste-water facility serving the south San Mateo County area.

The new charges will take effect Dec. 1. For existing single-family homes and apartment units, residents will be charged an additional 16 cents per month. Fees for commercial and industrial firms will

Slight hike in Redwood City goes into effect on Dec. 1

also go up on a sliding formula based on use.

Sewer charges for connecting a new single-family home will rise from \$167 to \$175 if the house is located in an area such as Redwood Shores, which already has paid for its share of the plant. If not the house is not covered by prepayment, the fee for connecting a new dwelling will be \$593.50.

Duplex fees for new construction will rise from \$234 to \$246 if plant capacity already has been financed for the area. If not, duplex connection and capacity fees will go to \$928.

Multifamily per-unit costs will increase for new buildings from \$97 to \$102 if capacity has been paid for or a total of \$381 if it has not.

New commercial and industrial

structures will have fee hikes under a complicated formula based on the volume of waste or waste water to be discharged from the buildings to be connected to the sewage plant in gallons per day.

City Manager Jim Smith said that the city was forced to raise sewer fees in order to pay its part of the joint powers agreement to build the regional waste water



sewer rates

plant. The facility serves Belmont, San Carlos and the West Bay Sanitary District (Menlo Park and Atherton) in addition to Redwood City. Standards for operating the plant are strict because the facility is located near the shell beds in San Francisco Bay, which are close to Redwood City. Smith said that the beds are the largest in the Bay and must be preserved.

"Clean water is not cheap," he said.

Eighty-seven percent of funds to build the sewage treatment plant

came from federal and state grants. Part of the agreement stipulated with the grants was that the plant be self-sufficient, requiring the cities using it to set fees that would pay for its operation.

The South Bayside System Authority, which runs the plant, has developed a plan to expand the existing 24 million-gallons-per-day capacity to 30 million gallons per day in a four-stage plant expansion program. Each stage consists of an increase of 1 million to 2 million gallons per day in capacity.