Disposal

Continued from Page B1

"There are five different legal teams working on this, devoted to there not being a discharge into the estero. We hope it will not come to that," said Richard Charter, a spokesman for Friends of the Estero, a group including farming, fish and environmental interests.

Another stumbling block to the west county option is its requirement for a 5 billion gallon wastewater reservoir in the Two Rock area. The reservoir would form a 250-acre lake, three times the size of Spring Lake and holding 25 times as much water.

Joe Tresch, the dairy rancher who owns the proposed site, is adamantly opposed to selling his land, and the city has pledged not to condemn agricultural property for the project.

Nearby property could be used for a smaller reservoir, but that would require scaling down the project, something the city does not want to do.

The other proposal seriously considered in the environmental impact report is the south county option. This option also includes farm irrigation and marsh restoration. It calls for nine small reservoirs and the discharge of 8 million gallons a day of wastewater into San Pablo Bay.

Critics claim the south county option was given less than a complete review, and the city will be asked Tuesday to give that option more thorough coverage.

"The report was very one-sided, saying that west county was easily the preferred approach and the best for the environment and for farmers," said Will Nord, a consultant for Lakeville area growers and owners.

Farmers have been cautiously eyeing city wastewater for their crops and livestock for some time. But the prolonged drought has given the matter new urgency.

Nord's group is forming a water district to buy wastewater from the city to irrigate at least 4,500 acres. "A large group of farmers have been very responsive; we've had very good community meetings and I feel it's a very viable option," Nord said.

West county farmers also are showing a renewed interest in the wastewater and have formed their own organization to lobby for it. Sebastopol apple growers want the wastewater and are putting together yet another proposal.

City engineers are looking at a cross-county plan, using elements from both the estero and south county projects.

While plans are still rough, one notion is to use a reservoir in the west county, with or without the Tresch property, supplemented with a reservoir or reservoirs near Lakeville in the south county.

Water would flow through restored marshland into the Petaluma River and San Pablo Bay.

The advantages are that more wastewater would be used for irrigation and a fight over discharge into the Estero Americano might be avoided.

The disadvantage is that such a composite plan would be more expensive than the estero plan, said Miles Ferris, director of the Utilities Department. "There is going to be a reality check when people see what the bills are to pay for it," he said.

Several groups, including the Marin County Board of Supervisors and the Sonoma County Farmlands Association, asked the city months ago to prepare the environmental impact report so component parts could be mixed and matched.

That didn't happen, said Carol Williams, a senior planner with Marin County.

Williams and representatives from the Farmlands group are expected to ask the city to change the format of the environmental report to make a cross-county irrigation plan easy to assemble.

Plans to dispose of wastewater in or through the south county have faltered in recent years because the Bay Area regional water board seemed opposed to discharge into San Pablo Bay.

But current plans call for wastewater to be treated to a much higher purity and include farmland irrigation and reclamation of marshes, something the first proposal lacked.

Santa Rosa would get a much more favorable reception if it went to the board again, said Larry Kolb, assistant executive officer for that board.

Drought

Continued from Page B1

Rock-Valley Ford-Bloomfield area is ideal for the long-term disposition of Santa Rosa's wastewater.

"The drought has hit us pretty hard over the last couple of years. We can really use that water," said Paul Bianchi, a Valley Ford dairy rancher and active member of a new group pushing to bring the vast reclamation project to west Petaluma.

Dairy ranchers with dry reservoirs are desperate. There are a dozen dairies hauling water daily for their cows, a costly and time consuming chore. State health officials have ruled the wastewater will be so clean that cows can drink it, a factor making the treated water even more valuable because it would end water-hauling.

The water situation has become so critical that water-needy ranchers aren't so concerned about bad relationships with neighboring ranchers opposed to the project. Neighbor niceties are giving way to the individual rancher's economic survival.

"Countries go to war over water," Sonoma County dairy adviser Rick Bennett said in assessing the competition for what he has long considered a valuable resource to the dairy industry.

Not everyone agrees. Petaluma dairy rancher Joe Tresch is strongly opposed to the project because part of his 320-acre ranch may be taken for a wastewater reservoir. He said no amount of money would ever make him sell the ranch, which has been in the family for nearly 100 years.

Tresch said he's watching out for his interests and way-of-life. Meanwhile, neighboring ranchers who want the wastewater for crops are lobbying for their financial interests. It's putting Tresch and his neighbors at odds.

"There are no good neighbors when it comes to water," Tresch said. He doesn't believe the wastewater will be the salvation of Petaluma dairy farmers. He said if ranchers can't make money now, the wastewater isn't going to bail them out.

"Why should I sacrifice my ranch so other dairy ranchers have one more thing to mismanage?" Tresch said.

Dairy adviser Bennett said the wastewater will make a difference, providing the area with an economic boost. He has preached the joys of wastewater reclamation for a decade. And he said the drought and California's looming water problems are bringing ranchers around to his way of thinking.

MARY CARROLL/PRESS DEMOCRAT

Dairy rancher Paul Bianchi kneels at the bottom of his dry reservoir, which would normally be about 5 feet over his head.

"The reclaimed water is more valuable to the dairy industry than it has ever been," said Bennett. He said high hay costs and declining milk prices make it more important for dairy farmers to raise more of their own feed.

There is competition among farmers for the wastewater. Landowners along Lakeville Highway in south Sonoma County also have made a pitch for the water. The south Sonoma County plan for disposing of Santa Rosa wastewater includes irrigating 4,300 acres of land and discharging into wetlands along San Pablo Bay.

For a time it seemed the wastewater would either go to Petaluma farmers in western Sonoma County or down Lakeville Highway to south Sonoma County. But the agricultural demands for water in both parts of the county recently have germinated a new, composite plan that could send the water both ways.

The new plan would eliminate discharge of excess wastewater into the Estero Americano, a waterway south of Bodega Bay that environmentalists deem too fragile for the treated sewer water. Environmentalists have vowed to legally challenge any plan that puts wastewater in the estero.

The composite plan is an attempt to keep both farmers and environmentalists happy.

The Santa Rosa City Council is holding a public hearing on the various wastewater disposal options at 2 p.m. Tuesday at City Hall.

Dairy rancher Simon Azevedo said the west Petaluma dairy belt will be nearly perfect for milk production if it gets water.

"This is a beautiful area for dairy cows. We have the advantage of having winters that aren't too severe and summers that aren't too hot," Azevedo said.

Petaluma dairy rancher and attorney Max Mickelsen, one of those ranchers banking on the wastewater for crop production, said the project, putting 7,500 acres under irrigation, would secure a vast agricultural greenbelt for generations to come.

"This may be the single most important land-use planning tool in Sonoma County history," said Mickelsen. "It literally commits western Sonoma County to remaining in viable agricultural production for the foreseeable future."

POLICE AND COURTS

Weapons cache found

Santa Rosa police confiscated weapons, explosive devices and narcotics paraphernalia Sunday from a storage locker off Orchard Street that had been rented out.

Sgt. Kent Knobelauch said the owner of the rental space was cleaning it out when he discovered the arsenal and called police.

Officers discovered 20 to 25 weapons, including Uzi submachine guns, assault weapons and silencers, a pipe bomb, detonators and other explosive devices. Knobelauch said drug paraphernalia also was found inside the storage unit, which was one of nine or 10 inside a two-story barn structure.

"We are backtracking as best we can to try to find out who owned all these things," said Knobelauch, who added there were documents found inside the storage space that police are investigating.

Knifing in Petaluma

A knife fight at a Petaluma bar Saturday night has put a Santa Rosa woman in the hospital and her assailant in jail, police officials said.

Gloria Nilda Mendez, 30, was taken to Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital where she was in stable condition in the intensive care unit Sunday.

Reben Amezcua Villafan, 24, was charged with assault with a deadly weapon and jailed on $50,000 bail.

Mendez and her brother had gone to LaGuadalajara Bar, where they struck up an acquaintance with Villafan, according to Petaluma police.

The conversation became an argument and Villafan and Mendez' brother got into a fight in the men's room. Mendez stepped in to stop the fight and was stabbed in the abdomen, police said.

Villafan fled in his car, but Mendez' brother took his license plate number. Police arrested Villafan a short distance away and took him into custody without incident. The knife was found in Villafan's car, police said.

Santa Rosa officer shoots woman in leg

A Santa Rosa police officer was put on administrative leave Sunday after shooting a woman in the leg during a disturbance at the El Rancho Tropicana on Santa Rosa Avenue.

Officers were called to the inn about 3 a.m. to investigate a fight in one of the rooms. But the occupants of the room refused to allow the officers inside, and they eventually kicked down the door to gain entry.

Officer Edward Hudson was one of the first to go inside. Police reports said Hudson felt threatened when he entered the room and fired his service revolver at a man. Instead the bullet hit Suzette Anita Martinez, 21, of Santa Rosa. Martinez was in stable condition at Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital after being treated for a leg wound.

Hudson, 30, was placed on administrative leave while the police department and District Attorney's Office investigate the shooting.

No weapons were found inside the room and the police department did not indicate if anyone in the room was arrested on any charges.

Hudson, who has been with the Santa Rosa

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Brown plays strings like

By PAUL CHRISTOPULOS
Staff Writer

They should declare the Santa Rosa Symphony strings a regional treasure.

The players showed their stuff once again as the orchestra resumed its season Sunday at the Luther Burbank Center. It was an afternoon of highs, but the opening "Fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis," composed for string orchestra in 1910 by Ralph Vaughan-Williams, resonated for the rest of the concert.

Conductor Corrick Brown led the 50 or so strings in a sophisticated and passionate performance. He gave the subtle effects and transitions that run through this piece their due, but urged the strings to sing out at every opportunity.

Vaughan-Williams handles the ensemble as a double orchestra. Those who, like myself, were familiar with the work only on record-

REVIEW

ing, were in for a treat. Br exploited the stereo effects of Baroque-style terraced dynar deftly, but let the burnished cism of the players have the word.

How does Brown lure sol like pianist Hung-Kuan Chen Sonoma? After Chen's per mance of Beethoven's Piano C certo No. 1, I can't be the only asking that question.

I believe there was a woma England a few years ago claimed the spirit of Beetho spoke to her in a trance. I d know about that, but the compo may well be in touch with Chen.

This young man can play. rhythmic sense is uncanny. showed a startling knack for well-placed accent, a bold

Searchers report no sign of fisherman

BODEGA BAY — Rescue teams searched the shoreline from Mussel Point to Bodega Dunes early Sunday, but were unable to find any trace of a fisherman believed washed overboard Saturday

that morning on a fishing trip.

The Coast Guard has not b able to determine how many p ple were in the boat. Ricardo's w said he went alone, but there w