

is a shortage of places to store water until it is needed for irrigation. Gallo buys wastewater from the plant at \$10 per square foot and stores it in a hillside reservoir in Cotati. The city pays \$300 per square foot to get fresh water out of the Russian River in the first place.

Raw sewage treated at the Santa Rosa plant comes from Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Rohnert Park, Cotati, the South Park Sanitation District, some county areas and septic systems all over the county.

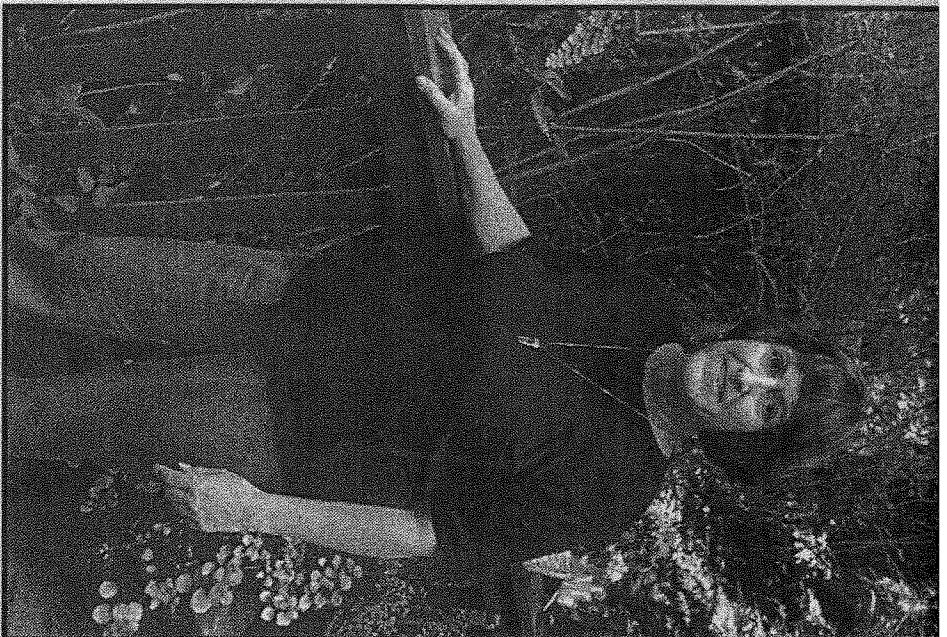
According to Ferris, the geysers pipeline was the best possible way to get rid of a lot of the effluent. The rest will still be discharged into the river.

"For as many people who will fight you on discharge," said Ferris, "there are as many who will fight you on storage sites." Ferris says that storage sites for wastewater are usually best located on wetlands, which are protected by state and federal laws. Ferris noted that there are some property owners in the Alexander Valley—where the pipeline is supposed to travel—who are proposing to create storage for some of the wastewater to be used for agriculture. But how much water will go to irrigation is not known.

EVEN AFTER THE pipeline is built, Santa Rosa can still dump wastewater into the Russian River, thanks to the discharge permits. River advocates are furious. Dr. Marty Griffin, a veteran environmentalist of both Marin and Sonoma counties, says that it is the water agency's goal to make Sonoma County grow, at any cost to the

water agency is "run by pro-growth supervisors," rather than people who understand the knowledge and watershed for the good of the citizens. "I think it's an outrage," said Griffin, that Santa Rosa is being run by supervisors with too much power, plus connections to gravel mining and construction interests. It doesn't surprise him that leaders such as these would be in favor of continued dumping of wastewater into the river—the more wastewater they can dispose of, the more they can expand the development of Sonoma County.

From 15 discharge points, treated wastewater enters the Laguna de Santa Rosa Estuary, where accumulated animal wastes from dairy farms are scoured off the bottom of the estuary and flushed as a turbid plume into Santa Rosa Creek, then into Mark West Creek and finally into the Russian River. Along with untreated animal wastes, the effluent contains phosphates, of which the Laguna is already overfull. According to water quality expert Daniel



Brenda Adelman thinks Santa Rosa's latest dumping permits were granted by a state board uninterested in regional water issues.

E. Wickham, "The Laguna de Santa Rosa contains concentrations of phosphate that rank it among the most heavily impacted waterways in the United States." Santa

Rosa's effluent is also phosphate-loaded. In response to the city and the state water boards ignoring this environmental threat, the Russian River Watershed Protection Committee—a 1,500-member group of business-owners, property owners, residents and tourists who want to protect the beneficial uses of the Russian River—has decided to sue.

Representing the RRWPC, attorney Kimberly Burr of the Northern California Environmental Defense Center, filed a lawsuit challenging the administrative decision to approve a long-range permit for Santa Rosa's discharges.

"The [current] permit requirements are more lenient than in the past," said Burr, who explained that the discharges are entering a "sensitive wetland" area in alleged violation of the Clean Water Act. "This is not a good faith move on the city's part," said Burr, who argued that the new permit requirements "need to be at least as strict" as they were previously, since the Laguna is "so heavily impacted with silt and nutrients." Burr added that the city is also trying to get the Laguna reclassified as a warm water body instead of a cold water body so they will not have to protect the endangered fish species that live in it.

Attorney Jack Silver, also of the Northern California Environmental Defense Center, said that the allegations against the state water board included the discharge of phosphates into the Laguna. According to Silver, the city doesn't want to limit the phosphates they release because "it's expensive to control" phosphates in effluent release. "We allege that

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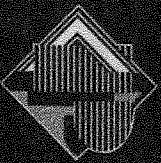
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