

96.8

### Laguna . . .

(Continued from front page)

sewer pond, and then into the adjacent Laguna.

It appeared, said Tancreto, that some of the leaks between the ponds were caused by gophers tunneling in the levies between the ponds, and between pond 5 and the Laguna. But the end result was a discharge of highly concentrated wastewater into the waterway.

"That is absolutely not acceptable," said Tancreto, who added that neither the city nor Barlow have permits to discharge into the Laguna. "They've got to do a better job of regulating the system."

The city responded to the or-

der by plugging as many of the holes as it could, but high water in the Laguna prevented a complete repair.

In fact, floodwaters inundated pond 5 on Feb. 2 and water was seen flowing from pond 5 into pond 4 where apple waste was being stored.

City Manager Paul Berlant said that about a million gallons of wastewater was also pumped from pond 3 into the city's sewer system and treated at the Santa Rosa Regional Treatment Plant.

Berlant said the city was not able to verify that any wastewater leaked into the Laguna, but it was nonetheless abiding by the state cleanup order. "The concern is that this stuff is going into the Laguna and we're go-

ing to make sure that stops," he said.

Tancreto said the apple waste "is not a pleasant material ... the odor has its own degree of unsavoriness. It doesn't include human waste so it isn't a disease-causing material."

But Tancreto added that "it's very high strength material, two to three times stronger than human waste ... and frankly, they have no permit to discharge anything into the Laguna. By happenstance, it happened that flows were very high in the Laguna at the time ... if the Laguna had been flowing at lower water, it would have been a serious problem."

The apple waste has a high "biological oxygen demand," and when mixed with water can

use up much of the oxygen available to aquatic life.

Michael Kyes, who has been a Laguna watchdog and critic of the storage system, blames the city for the discharge. "The city knew it was going to leak this summer," he said. "It would have cost a couple hundred bucks to fix those holes and this wouldn't have been a problem."

Kyes protested last summer when a gate was opened on pond 4 and stored wastewater leaked directly into the Laguna. The discharge was believed to be caused by vandals, but Kyes also pointed out to city officials that the ponds were leaking.

"I don't have an objection to them using the pond for storage," Kyes said. "What I do have an objection to is when it

leaks out of that pond ... when it continues to happen, I'll continue to be in their face."

Tom Barlow, whose company has been operating its Morris Street plant for nearly 50 years, said the heavy rains raised the level of the ponds so quickly that wastewater quickly emptied into pond 4. He said the company, which uses a 56-acre spray field most of the year, has only had to use pond 4 on a few occasions.

But the reports of discharges into the Laguna caused the processing plant to shut down for a week and the company pumped a million gallons of waste out of the storage pond. Barlow was unsure how much the company paid to pump the waste to Santa Rosa's treatment plant, but "it

wasn't prohibitive."

What could be prohibitive is if the apple processor is unable to use the sewer ponds as a backup to its wastewater disposal system.

"We'd like to get along and do it right," said Barlow. "We've got a lot of people depending on the cannery. If many more canneries go out of business, we won't have a lot of open fields with apple orchards left. If people worked with us instead of against us, it would be easier."

Berlant said the city and Barlow will meet with RWQCB officials so that "we can understand what they want and what they expect. If there is something that water quality wants, we'll do it, and Barlow will do it."