

OCEAN ISLE DECLARES EMERGENCY

Record Demand Prompts County Call For Water Conservation

BY SUSAN USHER

Record amounts of water are being used in the county south of Lockwood Folly River, according to County Water System Director Kenneth Hewett, straining the ability of both the county and local municipalities to meet the demand.

"The demand is approximately 30 percent more than we had last year in this area," he said Tuesday. "We're pumping the maximum the lines and pumping stations in that area can carry."

However, the situation isn't so critical that customers are being asked to take four-minute showers.

Monday Hewett asked all county water customers, from Southport to Calabash, to voluntarily conserve water in a radio announcement aired on local stations.

At noon Monday, Ocean Isle Beach Mayor LaDane Bullington declared a water emergency in that beach community and ordered mandatory conservation. She invoked an ordinance adopted by town commissioners several years ago that allows the mayor and/or water commissioner to declare such an emergency.

The order makes it against the law to wash vehicles, water lawns or use town water for purposes than normal in-home use. Flyers to that effect were being distributed Monday afternoon to businesses in town.

In its message, the county requests customers to voluntarily conserve as much water as possible because "the unusually high demand and low supply" are forcing the system to operate at peak capacity with little or no reserves.

"Further demands will require

mandatory conservation," warned Hewett.

At Sunset Beach, the town was strongly encouraging voluntary conservation by residents, but not requiring it. Administrator Linda Fluegel said the town fire department was considering taking a truck street to street and announcing the move Monday evening by loudspeaker.

The county is pumping four of seven wells in the field it owns at Sunset Beach, she noted.

In both beach towns, police officers on their rounds were asking residents seen watering lawns or washing cars to put away their hoses.

At Ocean Isle Monday afternoon the town was pumping water from nine of its own wells, trying to meet a daily demand of 600,000 to 700,000

gallons of water.

"Yesterday I'll bet we used 750,000 gallons," Water Commissioner Odell Williamson said Tuesday. Of that, the county was supplying only about 150,000 to 200,000 gallons, he estimated. Williamson said he was glad the town had shut down its wells as the county had first proposed when Ocean Isle became a county water customer.

To meet the town's summer needs, he said, "We've been buying all we could from them (the county) the past two months. But they haven't had any to sell."

Monday's thunderstorm helped, he said, by washing dust off cars and cooling temperatures so that people could get outdoors. "People are washing a lot of water washing cars and the like," he said. "And when it's

so hot they stay inside the house. That causes them to use more water."

Overall, he said, the town's in good shape, especially considering its time for dog days, the name given to the summer period of heavy rainfall.

At Holden Beach, Administrator Bob Buck said the town had not been asked to adopt conservation measures yet.

However, he added, "We have asked Holden Beach Enterprises to water its grass on a different schedule." Buck said the company is now watering very early in the morning at its west-end development.

Shalotte has not asked its water customers to conserve, but is "on the borderline," according to Superintendent Albert Hughes.

"If we don't get some rain in the next few days, that could change any time," he said.

Since last Thursday, at the county's request, the town has been running its two wells, providing all or nearly all of its water supply.

According to Hewett, voluntary conservation efforts paid off almost immediately Monday. By 6 p.m. he said, the amount of water available from the Oak Grove pumping station on N.C. 130, below Holden Beach, had increased eight percent, by 100 gallons per minute.

"If everybody on the system does the same," he said, "we'd be in excellent shape."

By voluntary conservation, Hewett means putting off watering lawns, washing the car and washing the dog—"all unessential water use," he said, adding with a laugh, "We're not

(See RECORD, Page 2-A)



Prize-Winning Shark

"Sharkbuster" Ronnie Cheers poses with the winner, a 529-pound tiger shark. It was one of nine tigers fished during the Poor Boy Shark Tournament. More shark tournament coverage is inside this issue.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL BROOKS

Camaro Takes Swim At Holden Beach

A strange sight met Patrolman George Atkins of the Holden Beach police when he was called to investigate an accident at High Point Street about 6:30 p.m. Saturday.

"A 1985 black Camaro was sitting 100 feet out in the waterway," he said.

William Lester Eades of the Holden Beach area was driving the car, "a little too fast, with a little too much to drink," Atkins said. His speed was 45 mph in a 25 zone, according to Atkins. "He didn't even attempt to make that 90 degree curve at the street, but just went straight ahead."

The result was a soft water dunking for the car, which Atkins estimated suffered \$3,000 in damages.

Eades, who was not injured, was charged with driving while impaired and resisting arrest.

Motions On Long Murder Trial Heard By Judge

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

A motion to strike the death penalty from consideration in the coming murder trial of Thomas Long was denied Monday by Judge Giles Clark in Brunswick County Superior Court.

In a pre-trial hearing, Long's attorney William Shell began introducing about 35 motions on behalf of the

32-year-old Leland man charged with the March 25 murder of his estranged wife, Annette, and the shooting of former county commissioner Franky Thomas.

Also denied was a motion to allow separate juries to rule on Long's guilt or innocence and on his sentence.

Clark allowed one motion in part. Shell requested the jury pool for the trial be increased from the customary 75 to 200. "This case has attracted so much publicity, because this man is not only charged with murdering his wife, but of shooting a former commission chairman," Shell explained. "I want to have plenty of prospective jurors so we don't get in a position of being pressured to accept some because we've about to

run out."

The judge ruled a pool of 175 jurors would be summoned. He also sympathized with a motion to submit the list of these names to Shell at least 30 days in advance of the beginning of the trial. "I think that's a reasonable time to do background studies on them, but the problem is we don't know when the trial will be scheduled," Clark said.

District Attorney Michael Easley, who will prosecute the case, said he was not sure whether the trial would be called for the next superior court session starting September 2, or held in a special session. Shell said he would be ready for the trial on the September date.

The motion regarding the 30-day

provision was postponed a few days until scheduling is definite.

Shell withdrew a motion requesting the voting records of potential jurors after Easley said his office did not gather that information.

Only a half-dozen motions were heard, with the rest postponed either for the trial judge or for Wednesday's session.

Long has been in custody in Brunswick County jail without bond since his arrest after the shooting March 25.

Mrs. Long died shortly after the 11:10 p.m. shooting with a 357-caliber Magnum, and Thomas was treated at New Hanover Memorial Hospital for a shoulder wound.

Residents Ask DOT For Road Improvements

BY SUSAN USHER

Another over-capacity crowd stood ready and waiting to complain to state Transportation Commissioner Tommy Pollard Monday night at a hearing on this year's secondary road program.

The hearing was held in commissioners' chambers as part of their regular meeting.

DOT proposes to spend \$515,469 in the county, said Pollard—not nearly enough to meet the needs expressed Monday night by rural residents of Leland, Exum and Ash, but more than the \$444,000 spent last year.

For every bad road situation cited Monday night, DOT officials could name several more.

"We are simply underfunded," Pollard said. Without more funds, he added, "We're going to have these kind of meetings and these kind of crowds from here to eternity."

For many in the audience, it was a repeat visit.

Doris Smith of S.R. 1323 in Ash, said residents of the road have been "like a yo-yo" for the past 35 years, moved up and down the road priority list. Where once it stood third, it has dropped to 39th, with little chance of improvement since areas with rapid growth are more likely to meet the criteria established by the state.

"We have to put the dollars where the need is greatest," Pollard told her.

The road was rated at the top of the list before the state adopted its current priority system, which uses a point system for the number of houses and other structures on the road and the amount and type of traffic it handles.

Saying both Democrats and Republicans had promised the road would be blacktopped, Mrs. Smith added, "We're told the same thing every year."

"We do everything everyone tells us to do. What we want to know tonight is what we can do to get our road paved."

Stabilization of the road with rock—with a promise of paving to follow—has caused more problems, she said. It creates a dust cloud that's a health threat to several residents with lung conditions.

But DOT officials only had two or three alternatives—property owners sharing the cost of the paving or getting the General Assembly to provide more money.

Residents of Blue Banks Loop Road in the northeastern section of the county said their road went from washboard to washout status in less than an hour during Monday evening's rainstorm. One man said the road was too dangerous for the four school buses that serve children who live on the road.

Jim Cook, the new district engineer for Brunswick and New Hanover

County, said a survey crew would be on the road next week in the first step toward more permanent stabilization of the road, a project that will depend on the willingness of property owners to provide the state right-of-way.

A former county commissioner, Pearly Vereen of Exum, asked for stabilization with rock or marl of the eight-mile Makatoka Road from Exum and Little Prong to Supply. "It cuts 12 miles off," he said of the trip to Brunswick Hospital in Supply.

"We'll certainly look into it," Pollard told him.

According to the transportation commissioner, the highway program has been underfunded for at least 15 years, and the General Assembly's allocation this year was not enough.

Rep. David Redwine, at the meeting to report on the legislature's summer session to the commissioners, defended the appropriation, saying it provides at least \$132 million more in funds next year and still more in future years.

While not allowing for program expansion, Pollard said this year's allocation is enough to make items included in the department's transportation improvement plan realistic, rather than mere "political promises" from the past.

"This is a bumbling," he said, urging commissioners to lobby during

(See ROADS, Page 2-A)

60% WOULD GO TO SCHOOLS

County Sales Tax Hike Hearing Set August 19

BY SUSAN USHER

Adding an optional half-cent to the local sales tax could provide a chunk of the money needed for local school construction. But before voting on its adoption, Brunswick County Commissioners want to hear what the buying and voting public has to say.

Monday night, on District 4 Commissioner Frankie Rabon's motion, they set a public hearing for Tuesday, Aug. 19, at 7 p.m. at the county complex in Bolivia.

"We need to go ahead and get the opinion of the people," he said after the board had discussed the matter and momentarily let it drop.

Encler, Board of Education Chairman Jim Fortner told commissioners, "From our point of view, the schools would like to see it implemented as quickly as possible."

He added to District 13 Commissioner Jim Poole that the additional revenue gained over one or two months' time wasn't worth rushing for.

Poole had suggested there was "no need to be in a big rush" since the county's budget is adopted.

If the tax were adopted there would be a two-month delay before it could begin collecting tax, putting the earliest time around October-November.

If it were adopted, sales tax charged in the county would go to 5 percent. Of that, three percent goes to the state, 1 percent is distributed to local governments on the basis of where the tax was collected and 1 percent is distributed locally on the basis of permanent population.

Sixty percent of the county's share of the new tax must be used to meet the capital needs of school construction. Over a period of 11 years that percentage would steadily drop until the full amount could be spent at the county's discretion. Of the last local-option half-cent sales tax, 40 percent had to be set aside for the schools.

Rep. David Redwine told commissioners the legislature hoped counties would supplement rather than substitute future local funding of school construction with the money.

While he objected to the last half-cent tax, District 2 Commissioner Benny Ludlum said Monday he would vote for the tax if it were earmarked for specific projects.

"I see the need in the schools and elsewhere," said Ludlum.