

River, creeks threatening

By PAUL BEATTY

Sentinel Staff Writer

The National Weather Service at noon today issued a flash flood warning for Santa Cruz County, especially for low-lying areas near Corralitos and Salsipuedes creeks in the south county.

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The bulletin is the Weather Service's highest level of warning, and residents in low-lying areas were told to immediately seek higher ground. The warning at noon was to be in effect until 3 p.m., and was prompted by the prediction of heavy rain this afternoon.

Corralitos and Salsipuedes creeks were threatening to flood their banks and by mid-morning, Paulsen and White roads in Corralitos were under water.

Some 200 residents of Eureka Canyon Road were stranded by two large slides. There were no reports of injury or property damage.

Silt-heavy flood waters of the San Lorenzo River poured into Felton Grove this morning, reaching the lower levels of many of the homes there.

To the west of Felton Grove, residents of Gold Gulch were standing on the river bank, nervously watching its swollen

answering "who can tell at this time."

Flood levels at Felton can be determined by the amount of rushing water at Boulder Creek, six miles north. That level was being reported at from 3 to 5 feet over the Boulder Creek dam.

Each new pulse of heavy rainfall in the upper mountain areas brought greater danger to the small riverside communities downstream.

Compared to the Storm of '82, however, the river was tame. A spokesman for the Santa Cruz Water Department said the river was flowing at 505,344 gallons per minute as it passed Felton at 11:30 a.m. On the first morning of last year's storm, the river was flowing at 3.71 million gallons per minute.

In the 1982 storm, Felton Grove had seven feet of water. Felton Fire Chief John "Mac" McDonnell said the decision to evacuate today was being left to residents. The Red Cross and Office of Emergency Services had been called on, though, to set up relocation centers should a mandatory evacuation be ordered.

In the past couple of evacuations, including one earlier this year, however, Felton Grove residents found their own shelter.

"We leave it up to their discretion," said McDonnell. "They know the river and the situation better than we do."

Felton and Zayante firefighters were busy checking out minor accidents and downed trees in their areas.

Zayante Fire Capt. Nick Pagnini summed up fears in the valley when he said "We're on the borderline. We're just waiting for problems to happen."

As the waters began rising, Ramona Burgdorf approached a

this would not be a serious flood.

Fellow resident Dick Groover said he had purchased his house on Park Way, which was being licked at by rising waters at noon, just six months ago. "I figured we'd had our 100-year flood and everything would be all right. Now we've had two of them this year." Groover was most worried about his Wurlitzer piano.

Highway 9, the only artery through the valley, was awash with water in a dozen places and there were fears it would go slightly south of Glen Arbor Bridge. Such a washout would cut direct access to Ben Lomond and Boulder Creek.

Highway 9 also was blocked by several slides, including a large slide above Boulder Creek near the Mountain Store. Caltrans has closed the entire highway and it may remained closed through the end of the week.

At noon, 18 county roads had been closed and, according to superintendent Larry Peters, "a whole bunch more are questionable." Among those closed were Morrell cutoff between Old San Jose Road and the summit, Lompico and Zayante roads and East Cliff Drive at Swan Lake, Corcoran Lagoon and Moran Lake.

PG&E spokesman John Fisher reported slides were taking down poles and lines, mostly up in the mountains. About 900 customers were without power in areas including Lompico, Empire Grade, Swanton.

San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District closed its high school and Boulder Creek Elementary School.

Again, though, the big concern was the San Lorenzo River and emergency service officials were keeping watch on the river



Pete Amos/Sentinel

The San Lorenzo River spilled over its banks at Ben Lomond park this morning

River threatens

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The level rose 3½ feet at the dam in Boulder Creek in just over an hour at mid-morning and rain was still falling heavily. The immediate danger area was Felton, but even fire officials in Santa Cruz were keeping a close eye as the muddy torrent raged near its banks through the city. Biggest concern was the level at high tide, 12:35 p.m., when the flow would be backed up by the surf.

But after surveying conditions at 11 a.m. and receiving a report from Felton, Assistant Fire Chief Bill Schuette said, "There's no way the river will rise fast enough to peak out with the tide."

However, Schuette said a close watch would be kept on the river as the next high tide builds at 1:03 a.m. Thursday. "After that, tides will be lower and in our favor," said Schuette.

The National Weather Service says the rain and surf activity is associated with a deep low pressure system off the Central California Coast. That system is expected to move to the northeast and bring a respite from the rain and high surf on Thursday and Friday.

The jet stream, however, is predicted to shift back again and could bring more nasty weather by Saturday morning.

Elsewhere in the county, oceanfront residents were bracing for the high tide while they cleaned up from the battering they took last night.

The Esplanade at Rio del Mar was littered with huge logs and stumps tossed there by the the mountainous seas Tuesday and early this morning.

On Beach Drive, the waves had torn out thousands of dollars of fresh repairs made since the cycle of wind, rain and tide-

spawned destruction began in late January, said Dave Hardy of Hardy Boys Construction.

The heavy seas did new damage as well, undermining houses, tearing out pilings and beating in windows.

Huge chunks of pavement were torn from the roadway and tossed about. Metal railings were torn from cement walls.

In Capitola, a resident of the Venetian Court said waves beat on his wall and came in through his sandbagged and boarded-up door from 2 to 4 a.m. today.

By 10 a.m., the water was back lapping at the sea wall.

The South County took a beating, too, this morning. Salsipuedes Fire Chief Jim Dellamonica said several homes in the Drew Lake area were under two feet of water. Inmates from the sheriff's rehabilitation center were sandbagging the lake, but, Dellamonica said, "It might be a losing proposition, it's still raining down here."

Rainfall reports for 24 hours ending at 8 a.m. today, and including the season's totals (since July 1) and those of last year at this time, are as follows:

	24Hr.	Sea.	Last Yr.		2.32	62.92	54.23
Aptos	1.76	33.35	32.92	Felton	2.20	51.05	47.60
Ben Lomond	3.21	73.81		Graham Hill	2.15	60.20	57.95
Bonny Doon	3.70	68.14	64.01	Happy Valley	3.40	87.05	72.30
Bldr Crk	4.40	85.56	70.06	Lompico	1.45	29.27	26.28
Capitola	1.75	40.32	35.94	Ntrl Bdrges	1.63	35.02	34.59
Corralitos	1.70	40.37	37.82	Rio del Mar	1.39	35.54	34.
Freedom	1.25	32.18	28.87	Santa Cruz	2.20	38.81	37.76
Empr Grde	3.50	77.43	75.07	Soquel	1.97	40.11	37.63
				Swanton			

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