

Valley welcomes sunshine instead of rain

By Lois Martin
Valley Press Staff Writer

Until Thursday of last week when the sun finally appeared, the question on the lips of most Valley residents was: "Isn't the rain ever going to let up?"

Rain had fallen in the Valley for the past 14 days with a total of 60.34 inches in Boulder Creek and 53.81 inches in Felton so far this year.

Last year's totals were 30.26 and 21.83 respectively for the two communities.

The rainfall, so far this year is well above average but no where near the highest totals recorded in the area. Boulder Creek is the only community that has complete records back to 1898 and the average shows 56.15 inches.

According to the U. S. government recording station at the Locatelli Ranch, Boulder Creek is the wettest spot in California between Laytonville and San Diego.

Vince Locatelli has been monitoring the government's rain gauge installation since 1931. The instrument is battery operated and automatically records the rainfall on a tape by the day Locatelli sends it in once a month.

The official record shows 9.55 inches have fallen so far this month and Locatelli is expecting a total rainfall of 80 inches for the 1972-73 season.

Other than setting a gloomy mood in the Valley, the effects of too much rain have swollen the river considerably and although flood hit Felton, another is not anticipated. Damage has been caused to property along the river and creeks where banks have been washed away and trees have fallen and been swept down only to lodge in some areas and cause small dams.

Construction is at a standstill in the new Felton Fair Shopping Center. According to Guy deJong, vice-president of William A. Post Corporation, the general contractor, the rain has delayed completion of the project for at least two months.

"We need seven days of dry weather to dry out the pad before we can proceed with the job," he said.

The foundation is about 80 percent complete, but further installation will have to wait for better weather.

The project was scheduled for completion in early April but will have to wait until summer now.

Another problem the weather has handed the construction firm is the freezing temperatures in early winter at the beginning of the construction, according to deJong, as the block walls cannot be installed when temperatures are lower than 40 degrees.

Utility companies have had an increased amount of work since the rains. According to Wayne Matthews, District manager of Pacific Gas and Electric Company, new construction activities had slowed down considerably, particularly where there are unpaved roads.

"The trenching activities in the gas department have become difficult and we have had more than the usual emergency calls for power outages due to slides and downed trees," he said.

"Power outages are not out of the ordinary for an average winter, however. It is not the rain and storms that causes the problem, it's the high winds which we have not had too much of a problem with yet," he added.

According to Lee Perry, Pacific Telephone

Company's district manager, the rainy weather has caused a 25 percent increase in the amount of problems which are reported.

"The biggest problem we have is with squirrels who, with reckless abandon, chew holes in our cables. They are often minute and go unnoticed until the rains set in and water seeps through the tiny holes," he said.

The second biggest problem at the telephone company is limbs falling on their lines and those which come through high power lines and fall on the telephone lines which cause arcing.

"The company is dealing with a great deal more Saturday and Sunday overtime work now just to keep up with the extra work, let alone make progress," Perry stated.

The company borrows men from out of the area during the rainy season from other counties where rain is not as prevalent.

The rain had not affected the Roberson Construction Company's crew working on the widening project in front of SLV High School as it had gone as far as it could go before the last storm and was waiting for the PG&E crew to complete its relocation of a gas line.

According to Jim Johnson of Roberson, the crew is not expecting to be held up should the rain continue as the ground is still workable at that point.

The Division of Forestry headquarters in Felton reports the excessive amount of rainfall not affected its operations any more than winter rains usually do. Although they are not involved with forest fires, they still have contracts to fight structure fires outside the local fire districts.

The men are involved in projects like training,

maintenance of vehicles, buildings, team teaching programs for the elementary schools in fire prevention, annual inventories, refresher courses at the training academy and this is the only time of the year the personnel can take vacations. So in some ways, we are busier now than during the summer months, according to Tim Huff, fire prevention officer.

Up at the California Yough Authority Camp Ben Lomond on Empire Grade, the rains have set the nursery operation back considerably.

The nursery section of the camp is involved in the packing and shipping of seedling trees all over the world at this time time of the year and the 60 plus inches of rain they have had so far this year has left the ground the consistency of pudding, according to nursery manager, Jerry Ranger.

"We are unable to put the tractor in the fields to lift the seedling beds and the men would sink up to their knees in many areas," he said.

"We have averaged one inch of rain per day during the month of February and the ground just can't drain that fast. If we can't lift the seedlings, we can't pack them for shipping," he added.

Many residents have been troubled by septic tank problems due to the excessive amount of rain due to the fact that the drain fields have become saturated and the ground simply can't take any more water, according to the local septic tank installer.

Recommendations to alleviate this problem are for persons to cut down on the amount of water used by using the local laundromats and conserving the use of water in other ways until the weather clears up the the drain fields can again absorb the excess water.

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Bikeway is planned on RR right-of-way

By Bruce Anderson

Valley Press Managing Editor

There has been much talk about bikeways for the Valley during recent months, but little action. The main problem has been the difficulty in widening Highway 9.

The county planning department now has come forth with a proposal which would provide a bikeway between Ben Lomond and Felton a year from now if approved.

According to Ron Marquez, a civil engineer in the planning department, the bikeway would use the Southern Pacific right-of-way between Felton and Ben Lomond.

The bikeway would be about 12 feet wide beginning at the old railroad right-of-way in Ben Lomond on the east side of the San Lorenzo River. The bikeway would also use portions of Glen Arbor and Quail Hollow roads, according to Marquez.

The board of supervisors approved the project last Tuesday and sent it to the Transportation Commission for approval of \$25,050 in gas tax revenue to build the bikeway.

The Transportation Commission is scheduled to hold a public hearing on the program between 8 and 9 a.m. on March 6. Marquez said that Valley citizens interested in bikeways

in the area may appear at the hearing to support or oppose the bikeway proposal.

Marquez says the \$25,040 will be used to acquire some of the railroad right-of-way which has been returned to the original owners by the railroad and to pave areas of the right-of-way which are not paved.

The bikeway would make it possible for a bicyclist to safely cycle between Felton and Ben Lomond without riding on the congested Highway 9.

If approved on March 6, Marquez estimates the bikeway would be completed one year from now.



Driver missing in accident

Full to the brim

Loch Lomond reservoir is full to brim and that pleases officials of both the San Lorenzo Valley County Water District and the city of Santa Cruz. Last year the Valley experienced water shortages during the summer due to the dry winter and officials are predicting that Valley residents won't have to contend with those problems next summer. VALLEY PRESS PHOTO