

# Residents seek second bridge

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**BOULDER CREEK** — Residents of a small mountain community here say they're one bridge away from disaster.

Though River Rights and Spring Creek — two small neighborhoods just off Highway 9 about a mile north of Boulder Creek — each have their own bridge, for the last 17 years residents of both communities have had to use the lower one, the Brimblecom Road bridge, to get across the San Lorenzo River to Highway 9.

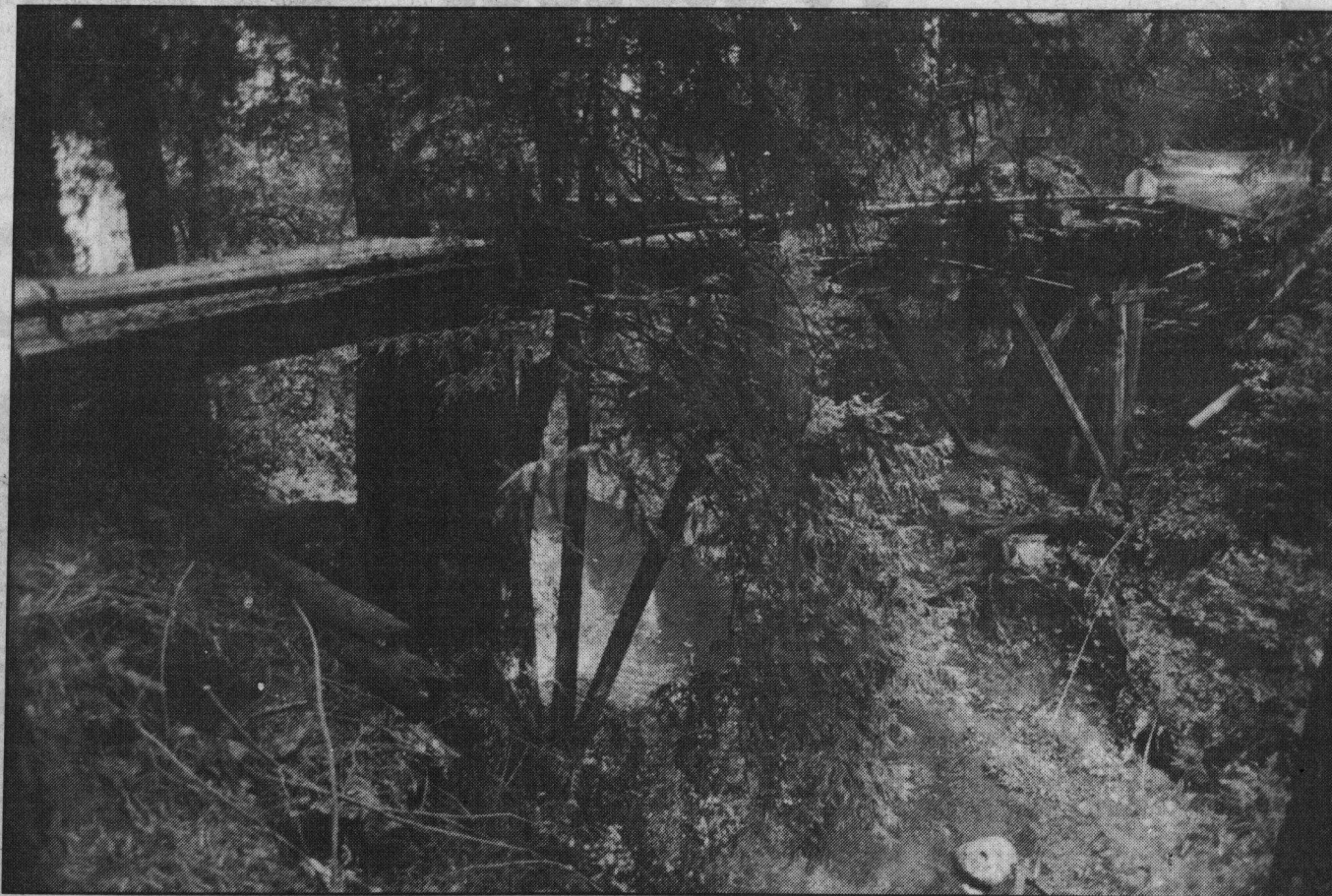
In 1973, the upper bridge was abandoned as unsafe, but was left in place as an emergency exit. Through the years, it's deteriorated, and now residents say they're afraid that if anything happens to the lower bridge, they'll be trapped.

They are meeting with San Lorenzo Valley Supervisor Fred Keeley to discuss possible financing measures to get the lower bridge replaced.

"In case of a fallen tree or another earthquake or a fire, we're just sitting ducks," said Louise Beaton, president of the River Rights Improvement Association.

"Our problem is that we are a little community with a single-width bridge," said Beaton. "With the recent earthquake and the winter freeze, it has become important that immediate action be taken to secure a second exit from the area."

Besides the second bridge being unusable, Beaton said a third possible exit, a fire road at the top of Spring Creek Road, also is gone.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

The upper bridge, now abandoned, is perched on stumps of redwood trees and was built about 1875

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Some 200 to 250 people live in the two neighborhoods — about 35 households in the Spring Creek and Glen Park area, and about 25 houses in the River Rights area.

The lower bridge, near the River Rights area, is a 110-foot-long steel and concrete bridge built in 1948 from World War II surplus girders and maintained by the county.

The upper bridge, known as the Spring Creek bridge, is an old logging bridge that rests on the sawed-off stumps of ancient redwood trees, built, residents think, around 1875.

Until 1973, residents maintained the Spring Creek bridge themselves. When a lawyer warned them of possible liability problems, they looked into the cost of upgrading it, said resident Norm Lipperd.

The county, however, told them they'd need to replace it and residents elected to abandon the old wooden bridge and take the long way out, via the bridge to the south.

Two years ago, they approached then-supervisor Joe Cucchiara about replacing the Spring Creek bridge. Since the bridge is on private roads, however, the county Public Works Department said it can do nothing.

But with the recent emergencies, Beaton decided to appeal to Keeley for help. Last Friday, the two walked through the neighborhood together.

Though Beaton said her main worry is the secondary exit, she's also worried about traffic on Brimblecom Road. As the area's population has increased, so has the number of cars — and their speed. The part of Brimblecom Road be-

tween the two communities is a straight shot, giving drivers a chance to pick up speed.

She said that a girl was hit by a car on that stretch last summer.

The water supply is another concern. Both areas get their water through one water pipe that runs along the old bridge. Residents fear that if the bridge goes, so will their water.

Rick Rogers, operations superintendent of the San Lorenzo Valley Water District, said the district checks the bridge's condition yearly.

"If the bridge goes, the pipeline is going to go, too," said Rogers. "But quite frankly, if the bridge went, we could restore service in a matter of hours."

Keeley said he's asking county Public Works Department and county counsel to investigate ways to pay for a replacement.

"There's no question but it would be very beneficial to have a secondary access," said Keeley. "The question is, how is it done. The roads on both sides of the bridge are private roads."

County officials said that government funds can't be used for improvements on private land. The county in the past has sometimes taken over a private bridge; however, public works employees emphasized the "in the past" part of the statement.

Some Federal Emergency Management Agency funds are available for bridge repair, but only for damages done by last year's earthquake.

Establishing an assessment district or a county service area are two ways to finance a new bridge, said Keeley, but



Louise Beaton worries her community will become isolated.

the money still comes from the areas — and people — affected.

Residents of Spring Creek said they'd like to see the bridge replaced, but not if they have to pay for it.

Lipperd, a resident since 1947, said a new bridge would cost several hundred thousand dollars.

"I think the majority would like to see a bridge in there," said his wife Dorothy, secretary/treasurer of the

Glen Park Improvement Association. "We would like to see it replaced if it's feasible, but not if it means an assessment district."

Tammy Matthews has lived in River Rights for 20 years and thinks replacing the bridge would be a good idea.

"It's always been talked about," said Matthews. "But nobody's ever done anything about it. We're talking a lot of money."