

Program benefits workers, residents

By KEITH MURAOKA

Sentinel Staff Writer

APTOS — Homeowners above Borregas Creek are getting their slopes stabilized for free and helping to employ low-income residents at the same time.

It's all part of the Community Action Board's Natural Resources and Employment Program.

The Borregas Creek project is being funded by a \$10,000 grant by the California Department of Water Resources. Work involves stabilizing the stream channel, protecting side slopes and re-establishing natural drainage.

Community Action Board Director Brad Kisner says the program has already "graduated" 11 low-income residents to landscape-type work in the private sector since the start of a full-time crew at the beginning of the year. The program has been in operation since June 1985.

"No employer wants to take a chance on an unskilled, untried worker," he says. "Our workers have proven themselves. When they leave our program, the employer knows the job will be done right."

The seven-person crew on Borregas Creek has been on the job three weeks already, doing everything from clearing debris and

domestic garbage to building an "energy dissipator" below the two existing culverts. The dissipator will slow water flowing at high velocity, preventing erosion of hillsides and reducing potential damage to the homes above the creek.

A series of checkdams also are being built to slow the stream water and encourage sedimentation in the eroded creek channel.

As a final phase, students from Soquel High School's agricultural class will propagate native plant seedlings, which will be planted to further stabilize at-risk areas.

The project is expected to be completed in 1½ more weeks.

According to Kisner, crew members also are available to do private-sector jobs. Tasks may range from erosion-control to clearing poison oak.

The Community Action Board's program is open to any county resident at least 18 years of age who meets the federal low-income guideline.

Crew members go through an academic portion that includes learning safety skills, how to use and maintain tools and how to install drainage and irrigation systems. An additional 16 hours of instruction focuses on skills for getting a job in