

Bill Lovel

Runoff from Tuesday night's rains eroded this stretch of road on Highway 9, forcing the roadway to be closed.

# Storm closes Highway 9

## Wary Valley residents watch swelling river

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SANTA CRUZ — A stretch of Highway 9 between Felton and Santa Cruz was closed Wednesday after runoff from a husky Pacific storm undermined the road.

According to California Highway Patrol Officer George Klein, the road will be closed indefinitely.

"They've got to come in and do some major rebuilding," said Felton Fire Department Chief Ron Rickabaugh. "The word they gave me was 'indefinite.'"

The damaged section is about 2 miles south of Felton. Runoff overwhelmed a culvert, washing out a 50-foot section under the road and leaving only a lip of asphalt over the northbound lane.

The closed stretch of highway begins north of Paradise Park near the Santa Cruz city limits and extends to Glengarry Road, south of Felton. It borders Henry Cowell Redwood State Park, and the closing is not expected to close access to homes.

The last time Highway 9 was closed for an extended time was in 1986, in almost the same area. The road



The Associa

Rescue efforts failed to save this unidentified man swept away flooded Los Angeles River Wednesday.

# Storm

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reopened after several months. Caltrans crews said northbound traffic will be diverted to Graham Hill Road. A flashing sign in downtown Felton warns southbound traffic to choose an alternative.

The storm dumped 4.5 inches of rainfall in Boulder Creek, filling the San Lorenzo River within inches of its banktop early Wednesday morning.

While bringing much-needed rainfall to the drought-stricken area, the storm carried with it warnings of flash floods and worries of mudslides early Wednesday morning.

Both warnings expired later in the day as the storm sputtered out, but a new cold front was expected to bring more rain Wednesday evening, the National Weather Service said.

In Felton Grove, a low-lying area adjacent to the San Lorenzo River in Felton, residents had watched the rapidly rising river with concern early Wednesday morning.

Evelyn Lynch said the river was about six inches from the top of the banks before the rain tapered off at 4:30 a.m. By then, she had moved her belongings upstairs, just in case. Her home is next to the river.

"You never know if it's going to quit or not," said Lynch, whose home was flooded in 1982.

Rickabaugh, the Felton fire chief, said that though the river was high, it had not reached the point where evacuation of Felton Grove was considered.

"It needs to get to the point of flooding houses," said Rickabaugh. "Even at that point, we just go out and give warnings."

Highway 17 remained open as Caltrans crews cleared dozens of minor rock and mud slides.

California Highway Patrol officers briefly escorted motorists through rock-strewn area near Idlewild early Wednesday.

By mid-day, a handful of roads remained closed, and numerous others had smaller slides, according to Susann Rogberg of the Santa Cruz County Public Works Department.

Closed due to slides were: Lompico Road at Lake Boulevard in the San Lorenzo Valley and Highland Way, three miles from Spanish Road near the Summit. Flooding closed Murphys Crossing outside Watsonville.

Roads reported passable but with numerous small slides included East Zayante in Felton; Bear Creek Road east of Boulder Creek; Old Ranch Road near the Summit; San Lorenzo Avenue in Felton; Bonny Doon Road in Bonny Doon; and Santa Cruz Highway in the Schulties Road area.

Love Creek Road in Ben Lomond, Lakeview Avenue and Brookside in Felton were flooded in sections, said Rogberg.

Brookdale resident Michael Thieman's home behind the Brookdale Lodge was flooded when storm runoff was channeled alongside the home.

"You could hear it running through the walls," said Thieman. "It was coming down that fast." At its heaviest, the water coming in the home filled a five-gallon bucket in eight minutes, he said. "We've got every blanket we own soaking wet outside. We're still mopping up."

Unlike the day before when clogged storm drains resulted in flooding, Wednesday's storm created no problems in Capitola, said Central Fire Department Capt. Christian Holm.

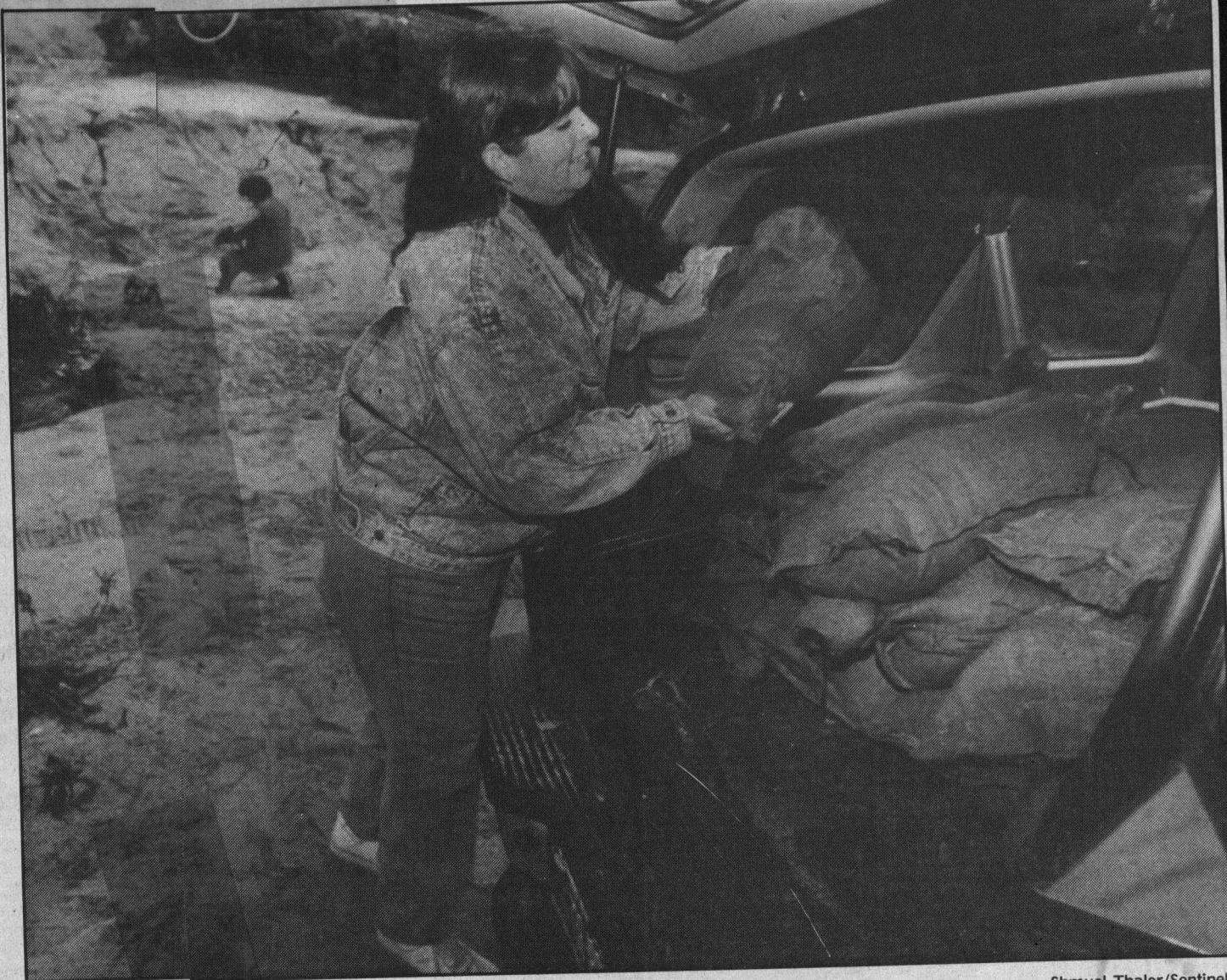
"Apparently they've been really up on keeping those drains clean," he said. "We're not having any problems."

Denise Powell, owner of the Wild Thing in Capitola, had sandbagged her store in preparation of a rerun of flooding the night before. But, Powell said, "It wasn't as heavy last night."

The parts of Soquel Creek that had dried from five years of drought were running again, said Holm.

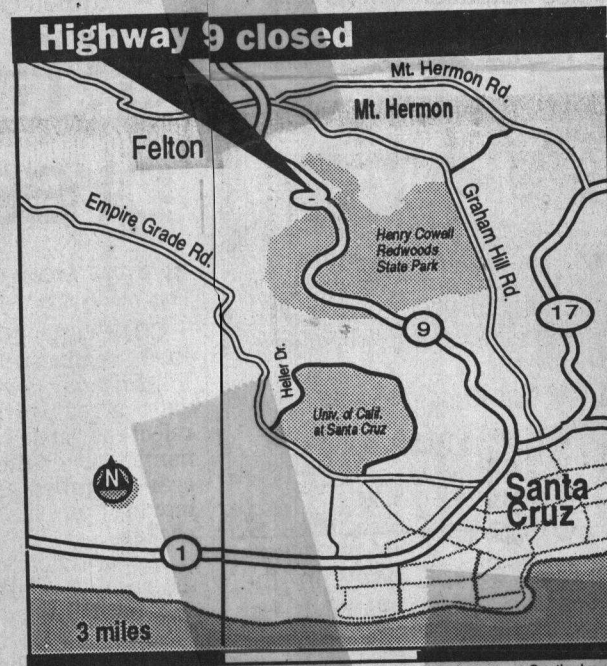
In Boulder Creek, the San Lorenzo River was 3½ feet over the dam by 4 a.m., said Mike Rocca, a Boulder Creek firefighter.

"We don't worry until it's six feet over, said Rocca. The San Lorenzo River was "the highest it's been in 10 years, I'll guarantee that," said Rick Peretto of the



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Florie Feilder-Mason loads up with sandbags on Lockhart Guldh Road for her Upper Glenwood home.



Sentinel map



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Workers move boulders off Highway 9 north of Felton.

Monterey Bay Salmon and Trout Project.

Loch Lomond Reservoir, the main source of water for Santa Cruz, has risen about four feet over the past week, said Ranger David Brooks.

The reservoir is now at 544.4 feet above sea level, but a 560-foot level is needed before the reservoir and recreation area can open because of the potential fire hazard, said Brooks. For every inch of rainfall, the reservoir level rises about one foot, he said.

**'You could hear it running through the walls. It was coming down that fast.'**

— Michael Thieman, flooded Brookdale resident