

APTOS
1990-1999

Residents feel ignored...except by traffic officers

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APTOS — Venturing home on Trout Gulch Road has turned into a nightmare, according to residents.

It's bad enough living along a two-way road eroded down to one lane in four places.

Now, some residents say, they feel victimized by ticket-happy California Highway Patrol officers, and by the county, which won't fix the road until next year.

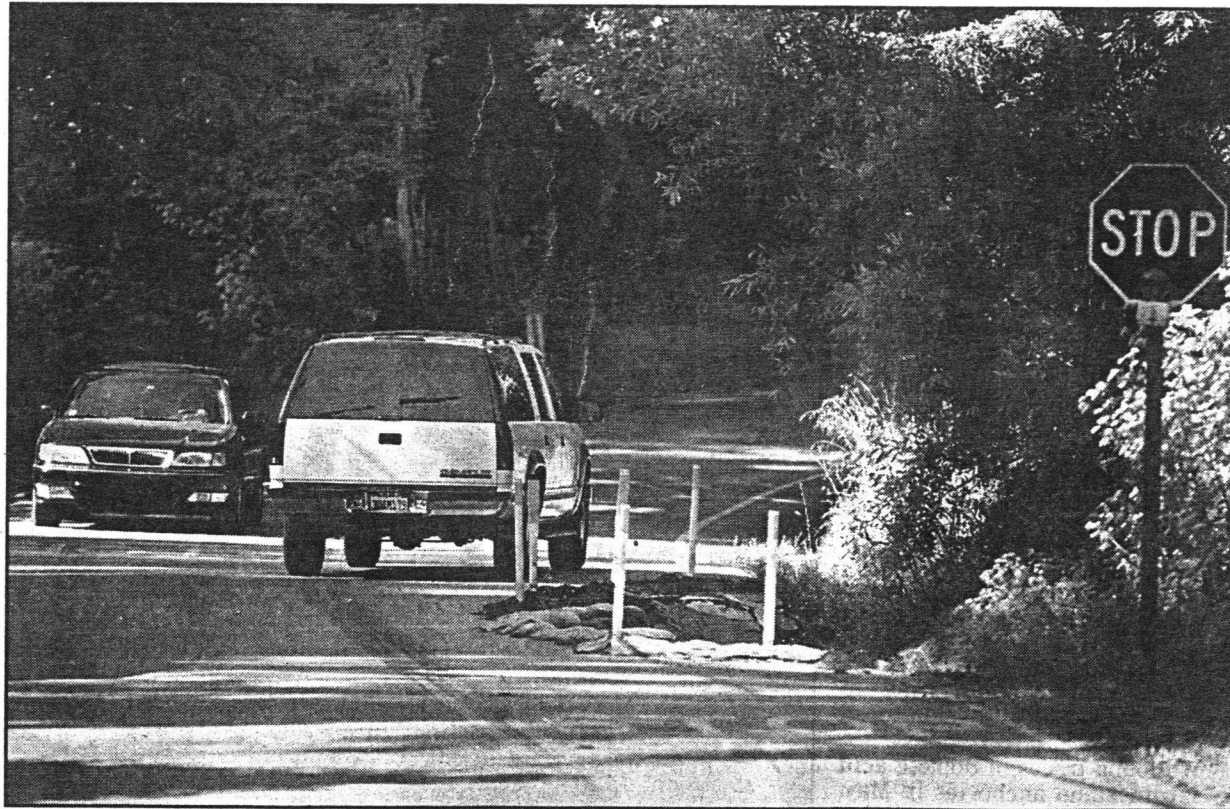
Community outrage was enough that residents began petitions to replace double stop signs with yield signs.

And they are asking to repair the crumbling road sooner than 1999. About 40 signatures have been collected so far.

The tickets are a red flag to many who use the road daily.

"The residents are not getting a friendly warning," said Makini Lew. "This is an extreme penalty for 98 percent of the people who misinterpret having to stop. They must have issued 100 tickets last week alone."

About a half-mile up the road from Valencia Road, the first pair of stop signs has been placed around one of the four



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Motorists on Trout Gulch Road must come to a full stop at the two slipouts from the rains.

holes. The signs, residents said, Memorial Day even though the have been in place only since washout occurred in February.

The \$100 tickets, they say, are being doled out in reams with

little or no mercy on residents.

"It's kind of harassment," said Richard Gibbon. "We had motorcycle police for many days and then they gave us a break, and now they're back again. The county must be either low on money or they just like doing it. I don't know which."

The road has enough visibility for motorists to yield appropriately, he said.

But officers said the residents are calling the law on each other.

"We have to respond to traffic complaints, and then we're getting complaints about our response," said Officer Keith Ericson, of the CHP. "If they get yield signs and we get complaints, we will still have to go back up there and monitor traffic."

Lew said she was putting up protest signs twice a day near the area where tickets were being handed out, and they were being torn down twice a day.

"Somebody doesn't believe we have the right to come to a consensus as a community," Lew said. She said requests to the Board of Supervisors for a town meeting have been ig-

nored.

The prospect of not having a normal, workable road until 1999 is unacceptable, residents say, particularly because the Pajaro Valley Unified School District has diverted its school buses away from the road — and yet logging trucks will soon be permitted on the patchwork pavement.

Nancy Drinkard, of the California Department of Forestry, said logging trucks have not started to use the road yet.

Public Works officials said tops signs will not likely yield to yield signs.

"Who yields when they get to the signs?" asked the county's John Presleigh. "You never know who is going to."

He said accidents would be more likely if the residents get their way.

The larger concern, residents said, was the erosion not being fixed until next year.

"It's just so life-threatening," Lew said. "The road is totally disappearing and no one's doing anything because of the powers that be."

"If we have another El Niño, we may not even have one lane open," Gibbon said.