



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Camp Paradise members mill around founder Larry Templeton as he spends time on the phone in his room at the Sea Breeze Inn.

Camp Paradise washed out

Homeless Residents flee homeless community as rains flood San Lorenzo River

By **CATHY REDFERN**
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SANTA CRUZ — Nature Saturday night did what Santa Cruz police had warned of doing for months — it cleared Camp Paradise.

Residents of the makeshift tent community along the San Lorenzo River began evacuating their homes about midnight Saturday after heavy rain pushed the river to dangerous levels

and flooded the illegal homeless encampment with waist-high water.

About 50 supporters helped with the late-night move, said Larry Templeton, the camp's founder.

They walked through Santa Cruz Memorial Park, because the path to the 40-tent camp near the Highway 1 overpass was underwater.

Templeton said he believed most of the group's belongings were kept from

washing downriver.

Camp Paradise included a communal kitchen with stoves, a generator and tarp-roofed bicycle repair shop, among other amenities.

Residents don't plan to return to the place they have called home since February, he said, but wouldn't rule it out.

"In our kind of life, you just don't know," he said, adding that they would like some permanent land, preferably on higher ground.

"We'll work for land and raise our own food and care for each other," he said. "I wish Santa Cruz would let this happen."

About one-third of the camp

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remained underwater Sunday evening, residents said.

About 30 camp residents stayed in 11 rooms at Sea Breeze Inn near the Boardwalk on Saturday and Sunday nights, courtesy of camp supporter Paul Lee.

Jason and Toni Kelly and their two children, 4-month-old Lance and 4-year-old William, shared a small room at the hotel. She and the children had been evacuated from the camp about 9 p.m. Saturday.

On Sunday evening, she nursed Lance as she searched for a box packed with diapers and a clean shirt.

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Jason had helped several others move Saturday night and Sunday, and had missed a shift at Armadillo Cyclery, where he is head mechanic.

Weary residents were about 90 percent finished Sunday evening, and grateful for the community support.

"Ideally, we would have been able to pick up everything there so nobody could have a complaint in the world," Jason Kelly said.

He told his wife how he walked out with a beaded bracelet, one of William's rain boots and his toy cement truck that had been floating in the water.

"I couldn't even see straight at the end," he said. "I've been there from the beginning and to put so much into a place ..."

"But we're not done. We're just temporarily displaced."

Santa Cruz Mayor Christopher

Krohn spent part of his first week on the job assisting with the evacuation.

He believes the city should help campers find a well-managed campsite and pledged Sunday to devote city resources to helping campers move the rest of their items.

Much of the camp was packed up and taken to the Santa Cruz home of Bob Woodside, a camp supporter.

Also, Krohn said, city officials have spoken to the Homeless Community Resource Center about providing up to two weeks of motel vouchers.

And when the vouchers run out? "Hopefully, the council will work on it," he said. "It won't necessarily be easy, but it is up to the council and the individuals involved in the camp (to find a solution)."

Krohn mentioned ideas to move the campers to city property such as the former train depot near the Boardwalk, but said those plans would need to be discussed by the full council and affect-

ed neighbors.

The council meets again Dec. 11. While most councilmembers are united in a belief that Camp Paradise does not belong along the river, Krohn wouldn't speculate whether a council majority would be willing to relocate the camp.

"I do realize there are a lot of homeless people out there besides these 28 who have needs and the city has limited resources," he said.

The tent village violates a city camping ban, but residents have garnered some community support despite a city order to vacate and violations for flouting the ban.

City officials have been struggling with how to humanely handle the self-proclaimed drug-free communal camp and how to square campers' needs with environmental and other concerns.

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