

Just a bit too much isolation

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LOMPICO — Most of the time, Lompico residents cherish their isolation.

Nature gave them a full measure last Wednesday when a major mudslide closed the only road in and out.

It was 48 hours before a single lane of traffic was allowed to trickle back into the community. As late as Saturday, trees and electrical lines were left lying along Lompico Road where the 1,000 or so hardy mountaineers continued to tough out the long winter.

Runoff waters washed across the road, roiling from the steep hillsides. Cascading streams feeding into Lompico Creek were running between banks of sandbags and concrete chunks that had been washed from the road.

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Pickup truck driver makes his way through path cleared by National Guard bulldozer.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Lompico

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Some drivers sneaked through to their homes before officials gave the go-ahead Friday afternoon. One young father in his "Lompico" pickup truck with the regulation two dogs in the back tried to go through as early as Thursday, arguing with officials "I'll assume all liability."

Even after the official go-ahead the next day, the massive weight of earth above the road cut seemed on the verge of giving way at any minute.

Two National Guard construction units came in at the request of County Supervisors' Chairman Joe Cucchiara Saturday. By 10:30 a.m. they were carving into the slide with heavy equipment.

Cucchiara said his office asked state Office of Emergency Services Director Alex Cunningham to request help from the guard when reports of 35 road closures came in Friday morning.

Along with Lompico Road, the guard started work on Bear Creek Road and Two Bar Road in the Boulder Creek area, and Bean Creek Road over in the Scotts Valley area.

"At this point, the National Guard has appraised the situation and determined our call for help was justified. They're saying they need more troops and equipment," Cucchiara said.

The county is further requesting 35 dump trucks, two more loaders, a D-7 bulldozer and a mess unit to feed the troops. If sent, the additional men and equipment will amount to a construction battalion working in the county.

The guard units, which set up camp at Felton, were made up of 39 men, four loaders, one backhoe and 10 five-ton trucks. The public works yard in Felton was used as a staging area and the soldiers are to stay at Mt. Cross. The Boulder Creek Fire Department and its

auxiliary took on the task of feeding the troops.

"The National Guard's performance has been excellent and it's clear they're not only capable but more than willing to get the job done. To me, we're just privileged to have them in our community and they've said they'll stay until the job is done," Cucchiara said.

Opening Lompico Road ended the portering of food along Thunderbird Trail, a fire trail that runs from behind Zayante Inn to Lompico, above the slide.

The slide caught Lompico kids in school and most of them were picked up by working parents who had other places to stay, or carefully trekked back in across the slide area.

About a dozen pupils stayed over at a Red Cross emergency center at Mt. Cross Wednesday night.

Lompico folks are hardy. Rough

winters are frequent and the majority of mountaineers stayed on even after the Storm of '82.

But, Saturday appeared to be the end of Susan Aasen's love affair with Lompico.

Her backyard was gone, its tons of dirt slumping 25 feet down onto Lake Boulevard overnight and the house left sitting next to the chasm. The security of the home is gone.

"I'll be back to get my things," she said, "if the house is still here."

U.S. Rep. Leon Panetta, D-Monterey, has petitioned Reagan to extend the filing period for emergency grants and loans from its deadline of Feb. 8. The congressman said he's hopeful.

State Sen. Henry Mello, D-Watsonville, introduced a bill Friday that would allow use of state Coastal Conservancy funds for beach repair at the request of cities

and counties whose coastlines have been battered by storm-churned seas and surf.

A light rain was falling Saturday and the weatherman was saying the skies should clear for the rest of the weekend.

It was a welcome message, but the Santa Cruz Mountains hardly seemed to need more water to cause more trouble as runoff was continuing to bring down mudslides and trees in remote areas.

No deaths in the county have been directly attributed to the winter. Estimates of damage here, mostly to county roads, are running at around \$2.5 million.

Those damages include the hundreds of large potholes that are popping up all over.

One of them caught a car just outside Felton Firehouse Saturday morning and wouldn't let it go. The driver had to call for a tow-truck.

National Guard bulldozer works to clear roadway

Dan Coyro/Sentinel