

# LOVE CREEK LANDSLIDE DISASTER JANUARY 5, 1982

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

By

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## INTRODUCTION

Late in the afternoon of Sunday, January 3, 1982, a light rain began to fall in the upper reaches of the San Lorenzo River Valley located in the north central portion of Santa Cruz County. The rainstorm, blowing out of the southwest, rapidly increased to monsoon-like intensity and sustained that level until late Monday night, clearing just before midnight.

The communities of Boulder Creek and Ben Lomond (figure 1) on the San Lorenzo River upstream from the City of Santa Cruz represented "ground zero" for the storm. Rainfall data in this region was reported to be nearly 20 inches for the 30-hour storm period. Many residents who had left for work outside of the area on Monday morning were unable to return to their homes later that day. Those who stayed behind were literally cut off from the outside world by the swollen river channels that blocked their exit and the landslides and fallen trees that downed telephone and electrical lines.

North of Ben Lomond along Love Creek, the stranded residents of the hillside community of Love Creek Heights were preparing to "weather the storm." The nearly 40 homes that dotted the densely-wooded lower slopes ranged from older summer cabins to expensive modern homes. During the evening hours of Monday, January 4, the residents busied themselves, collecting water from their dripping ceilings, attempting to control the surface run-off and erosion around their property, and tending their animals. Near midnight, the storm ended rather abruptly and the sky over the Love Creek area was clear and still, filled with a bright array of stars. The only evidence of the intensity of the storm that remained at that hour was the roar from the bottom of the canyon, reminding everyone that

## LOVE CREEK LANDSLIDE

### INDEX MAP

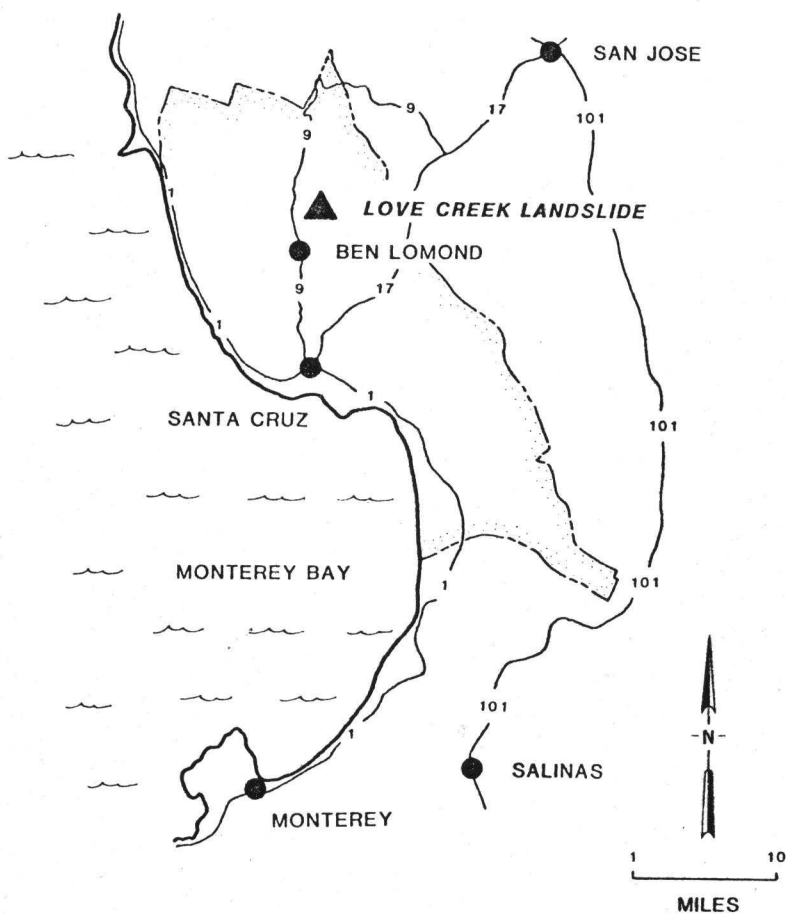


Figure 1. Index map of the Love Creek landslide. Numbers indicate major high-

ways. Stippled area defines the boundary of Santa Cruz County.