

This mile-long stretch of Highway 9, north of the scenic view area between South Felton and Paradise Park in Santa Cruz, will be closed to motorists beginning Feb. 9.



Lucjan Szewczyk/Press-Banner

# Highway 9 closure, delays loom for SLV residents

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Major roadwork is set to begin next month on Highway 9, bringing with it delays for motorists in Boulder Creek and Brookdale, and the complete closure of the roadway between Felton and Santa Cruz.

In four locations along the San Lorenzo Valley, work crews will be constructing a retaining wall and viaduct, as well as modifying drainage systems along the Highway 9 roadway — all with the stated goal of reducing sediment levels in the San Lorenzo River while simultaneously strengthening the arterial route against slides.

The \$1.8 million project — scheduled to take between 9 months to a full year — is set to begin on Monday, Feb. 9.

"It's a combination roadway improvement and environmental enhancement," said Caltrans spokesman Colin Jones.

According to a Caltrans news release, there will be single-lane traffic control while work takes place between Alba Road and Western Avenue in Ben Lomond, near San Lorenzo Avenue in Brookdale, and past McGaffigan Mill, north of Boulder Creek.

Work at each site is estimated to last for approximately one month.

Motorists will likely be faced with 10 to 15 minute delays Mondays through Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., and on Fridays from 12 to 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Between Felton and Santa Cruz, however, is another story. Caltrans estimates that the roadway between the northern boundary of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park and Paradise Park will remain closed until July, while crews work to shore up the storm-weakened hillsides along the narrow stretch between mile markers 3.55 and 4.4.

The closure will not hinder access to residential driveways or businesses, but motorists can expect delays while taking alternative routes.

Jones said that, by closing that stretch entirely, it will allow the work to be finished more quickly.

"We understand its going to be a big inconvenience so we appreciate the publics understanding," he said.

"By closing that section we'll be able to open a lot quicker — we want to make sure it's in good shape."

Santa Cruz County Fifth District Supervisor Bruce McPherson called the impending delays and closures "an uncomfortable necessity," saying that taking these preventative measures now will protect the river as well as potentially prevent losing the roadway entirely from erosion.

"It's a long-term project," McPherson said. "Let's get ahead of it now and address these potential slip-outs."



A Caltrans map indicating the four areas of Highway 9 that will be affected by the upcoming construction.