



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Work is ahead of schedule on the damaged levee, shown here looking east from Riverside bridge.

Levee repairs nearly done

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11-12-89
SANTA CRUZ — The Army Corps of Engineers says repairs on the San Lorenzo River levee will be finished by Thanksgiving, well ahead of schedule, and that even now it would take one whale of a storm to cause any flooding. ♦

"It would take a lot of rain to do any damage out there now," said engineer Torres. "I think it could hold right now."

Torres is one of about 15 engineers and construction experts the Corps brought to Santa Cruz from as far away as Alaska to help rebuild the levee. The actual rebuilding is being done by Granite Con-

struction at a cost of \$1.2 million, but the engineers are in charge.

The Oct. 17 quake left the river banks lined with long, deep cracks from just above the Riverside Bridge all the way to the river's mouth, raising immediate concerns about flooding in the event of a big storm. If the river had risen to the depth of the cracks, the bank might well have been washed away, unleashing the river.

Work on the levee began just before Halloween and engineers estimated it would take 30 days to finish. But a day-and-night work schedule has put the job ahead of schedule. And most of the cracks turned out to only be six to eight feet deep.

"We've had some guys here working 12 hours a day for more than two weeks straight," said Mark Gabrielson, another engineer. "We're having to import one heck of a lot of material."

"We are very happy about the weather," Torres said. "We didn't want any of this water going into the neighborhoods."

Torres said that he hopes to fly home for Thanksgiving, but expects to return to Santa Cruz the following week to tie up loose ends. Then, come spring, the Corps will return to build a permanent levee.

"This is just a temporary fix," said Gabrielson. "We have to come back and make sure it will hold in the long run."