

Soquel bridge rebuild planned

Bridges

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SOQUEL — Cars now whiz by on busy Soquel Drive, the four-lane arterial running through the middle of Soquel Village. But next spring, traffic is expected to slow to a crawl as two lanes are closed for reconstruction of Bargetto Bridge.

The new bridge over Soquel Creek will be two feet higher as a flood control measure. The \$2.5 million cost is being covered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Work will also eliminate a center support that has a tendency to catch logs, jamming the creek and leading to flooding during storms.

"It's not the solution to flooding, although the depth of flooding will be lessened," said Tom Burns, an administrator for the county Redevelopment Agency.

The creek has flooded nine times since 1862, according to county officials.

During a major storm, it probably still will escape its banks, but the flooding likely would be less than in 1982, when downtown Soquel and nearby residential areas were swamped.

Construction is expected to get under way next April. The work, which will take an estimated eight months to complete, includes raising Soquel Drive at both ends to meet the bridge. The bridge will remain open during construction, although traffic will be reduced to one lane each way.

"The hardest part is going to be not closing traffic down," said Bill Williamson of the coun-



Bargetto Bridge, which crosses Soquel Creek in Soquel Village, will be replaced by one with fewer center supports.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel

ty Public Works Department.

The existing bridge, built in 1957, got its name in 1983. The tribute, in memory of Larry Bargetto, 'longtime owner of Bargetto's Winery, was part of a project sponsored by the business community to install metal arches and planters.

The project also will involve some street improvements. The right-of-way will be eight feet wider to accommodate sidewalks and bike lanes. New planters also will be installed. Funding for those improvements will come from county Redevelopment Agency bonds.

Merchants in the village want to make sure the bridge doesn't close, which happened when the Porter Street bridge was replaced.

"We called it the disaster of '96," said Tish

Miller of the Flower Mill.

So far, she said, county officials seem to be "very accommodating."

Like the Bargetto bridge, the Porter Street bridge had a center support that tended to trap logs in storms.

Three years ago, after floodwaters in ram-paging Soquel Creek consumed at least three back yards, homeowners sued the county. They claimed the new bridge was to blame while county officials called the flooding an act of nature.

Burns said the suit was settled out of court with an agreement to repair the bank of the creek.

The problem is that people have built in the flood channel, Williamson said.

This time, the Redevelopment Agency undertook additional hydrologic studies. Williamson said the studies show that the new bridge will not erode the banks downstream.

"It may even help erosion, but a river has a mind of its own. You never know what it is going to do," he said.

Residents who attended an informational meeting sponsored by the county last week expressed concern about traffic. They also asked about the bridge design.

"We want to be able to see the water," one man said.

The county has no plans to use riprap, only "small, clean rocks," said Glenn Goepfert of the Public Works Department.