

# California hit hard by heavy rains, snow

By DOUG SAUNDERS

In the aftermath of unprecedented flooding that began on New Year's Day, California has been ringing out the old year and "wringing" in the new. More than 40 inches of rain fell here in the High Sierras during a six-day period, soaking a snowpack that was 10 feet deep.

By week's end more than 100,000 people had been evacuated from their homes as levee breaks and raging rivers turned 37 of the state's 58 counties into disaster areas. Many of the region's golf facilities were affected.

"The Carson River was 150 yards wide as it flowed through my golf course," said Jed Ander-

son of Genoa Lakes in Genoa, Nev. "I had five holes totally engulfed by the river when it spilled over the banks. I was left with quite a bit of debris on the course but no major damage."

Craig Pearson at Whitehawk Ranch, a newly opened course in the Feather River watershed, was not as fortunate.

"The Sulphur Creek, which borders our back nine, is a stream that usually dries up in late fall," Pearson explained. "We picked up 15 inches in the three days around New Year's and the creek was 100 yards wide and out of control. The heavy flow washed away three holes on the back."

At the Resort at Squaw Creek in Squaw Valley, mud slides off the adjacent mountain sides did heavy

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damage on the second, fourth and 13th holes and also destroyed a stretch of floating bridges.

"My course was also impacted by mud slides from a mountain side a half-mile away that dumped debris and silt on the course," said Superintendent Mike Carlson.

The same was true for other mountain courses that have streams running through their layouts. Luckily, most are routinely closed until May anyway, giving superintendents time to make repairs.

However, these mountain torrents headed downhill and quickly filled reservoirs, placing pressure directly on flood control dams. Oroville Dam on the Feather River, Shasta Dam, and Folsom Dam on the American River filled to near capacity in a few days. The continuing runoff forced the hand of water officials — resulting in water releases at record rates.

The first evacuations came in Yuba City below Oroville Dam. The town is bordered by levees that control the Feather River. At Peachtree Golf Club, superintendent Tim Thilo was ready for water on his course because it is built in an old river bed. But he couldn't believe how quickly the water rose.

"We had a bad flood in 1986 and my course was under 4 feet of water," said Thilo. "I spent Dec. 31 moving my equipment to a cart barn that stayed dry in '86. On New Year's Day I checked the course around 2 p.m. and decided to do some sandbagging around the clubhouse. The police came by and told us the water would be coming up soon. In a few hours there was over 8 feet of water on the golf course and over 4 feet in the clubhouse."

A 1,000-foot-long levee break on the Feather River south of Olivehurst flooded a 20-square-mile area. A mile from the break was Plumas Lakes Golf Course. The course was under 20 feet of water, submerging its two-story clubhouse, equipment sheds — everything.

On the American River, outflows at Folsom Dam were up to 115,000 CFS when the river spread out over Ancil Hoffman Golf course in Sacramento.

"The river grew to almost a mile wide as it poured up over my course," said superintendent Rich Sizelove.

Sizelove's major problem stemmed from debris carried by the river's force. It took three days for the water to subside before he could get out on the course to clean up. Sizelove estimated it would take two weeks to collect and haul away the debris.

The downstream flow also hit hard at Dry Creek Golf Course in Galt, near Modesto. The normally tame Dry Creek became a raging river, as deep as 15 feet, and soon covered the golf course.



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