

Storm damages Elkus Ranch, limits access

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Published on: January 31, 2023



Elkus Ranch entrance when the bridge was intact in 2022.

As 2023 roared in like a lion, ushering in a series of storms, many Californians experienced some impact from flooding, power outages, fallen trees, road closures and even evacuations.

UC ANR colleagues at [Elkus Ranch](#) are continuing to deal with fallout from the storms, which swept away the bridge crossing the creek at the entrance to the property and knocked out the water pump.

"The New Year's storm washed out our bridge and severely restricted our access to Elkus Ranch," said Frank McPherson, UCCE Bay Area director, by email on Jan. 11. "We currently have no vehicle access to the ranch and a few critical team members are only able to cross the stream via a bucket lift.



Crossing Purisima Creek by bucket lift to enter Elkus Ranch takes about 2 minutes, which feels like a snail's pace compared to driving over, says Leslie Jensen.

"In addition, our water pump system was washed away, leaving us without the ability to create safe drinking water beyond what we have currently stored in storage tanks on the ranch. Our sewage system has also been impacted and we are diligently working to minimize any potential environmental impact to the area, and the ranch is operating without power."

Staff members – as well as the goats, sheep, rabbits and other animals that live at Elkus Ranch – are fine, McPherson said. However, all events at Elkus Ranch for January and February events have been cancelled. McPherson is concerned not only that the facility isn't available to the San Mateo County community, but also because fees charged for events are used to pay for animal feed, veterinary services and some staff salaries.

He has been directing people who want to help to the [donation button](#) on the Elkus Ranch website.

As of Jan. 30, the power has been restored, but Elkus Ranch staff members are still slowly crossing the 30 feet over Purisima Creek by bucket lift to feed and care for the animals and tend to critical ranch operations.

"If all goes well, we should have a bridge in six weeks," said Leslie Jensen, Elkus Ranch coordinator.

After the bridge is replaced, McPherson hopes to bring in portable toilets and bottled water while the water system is being repaired to reopen Elkus Ranch and resume programs by April.



The storm knocked down the water pump house and the equipment was washed away.