



ARCATA FIRE DISTRICT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Horse Rescue on Clam Beach

McKinleyville, CA- (April 2, 2015)- At 2:57 PM Arcata Fire District was dispatched to an agency assist, horse rescue on Clam Beach. The Humboldt County Sherriff Office (HCSO) was requesting assistance with a horse stuck in Strawberry Creek at Clam Beach. Deputies and an Animal Control Officer had made numerous attempts to free the horse with no prevail. The horses' legs were buried in deep suctioning mud and she had become buried to her belly. After being stuck in the water for over an hour, the horse was extremely stressed and had become hypothermic.

Firefighters from Calfire Trinidad Station and Arcata Fire District arrived at scene to assist. Emergency workers used large hose lines and manpower to lift the horse from the mud and drag her to the bank. Although out of the water, the horse was still stuck in thick deep mud and was beyond the point of exhaustion. Battalion Chief Sean Campbell reported, "Once we got her to the bank, she was wiped out. Her head was down and she was shivering. We covered her up and let her rest in the sun before we tried to move her again. The one problem we still had to overcome was getting her back across the creek that she had been stuck in for over an hour." The horse and emergency workers were resting on a small section of thick mud. Rescuers still needed to move the horse another 20-30 feet before she was on dry sand. The creek mud was so thick, emergency workers sunk to their thighs when they crossed.

Crews wrapped the horse in blankets and allowed her to rest for nearly two hours as additional emergency personnel and equipment were summoned. The additional personnel and equipment included: additional deputies from the HCSO, Calfire High Rock Crew 3, a large animal veterinarian, Hooven and Company heavy equipment and operators, sheets of plywood, ropes and assorted hardware.

After nearly two hours of lying in an awkward position, in the thick mud, crews knew they had to get her standing before dark. A fire utility was used to connect a tow strap and hose lines to the horse in an attempt to pull her out of the mud. Other team members held hose lines under her chest and hind quarters and lifted as the truck pulled. This action prompted the horse to give one last effort to stand up and she was successful in doing so. She teetered



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back and forth, nearly falling to the ground numerous times as crews encouraged her to fight. She gained her balance and a lead rope was used to walk her 10 feet to a little firmer ground.

Team leaders from the sheriff department and fire agencies coordinated a plan to use the wooden bridges that led to the beach from the south parking area as a solid surface across the creek. The Calfire High Rock crew dismantled the bridge and moved it to Strawberry Creek and placed it into position. The owner and emergency workers led the exhausted and shivering horse across the bridge to dry sand.

A crowd of onlookers began to cheer as did the emergency personnel who worked for hours to free her. The veterinarian assessed her condition and determined she was ok to walk the beach to a dry trail, staying away from all of the creeks.

Assistant Chief Justin McDonald reported, “This was a real team effort that took a lot of help from multiple agencies. We worked together very well and were successful in the rescue effort. Our workers were soaked from head to toe and I’m glad we were able to help this beautiful animal back to safety before it got dark and too cold.”

The owners of the horse expressed their gratitude to all involved in the rescue effort.

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