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Chileno Valley Newt Brigade awarded grant to make Chileno Valley Road safer for newt migration

The Chileno Valley Newt Brigade has been awarded a grant of \$77,876 by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to study ways to reduce the mortality of newts and other amphibians and reptiles on Chileno Valley Road near Laguna Lake in northern Marin County. The newts are often killed by traffic while crossing the road to reach the lake during their four-month spawning season.

The grant will allow the Newt Brigade to hire Dokken Engineering to study ways to modify the road to allow newts and other animals to survive while migrating to and from Laguna Lake for breeding purposes. United States Geological Survey biologists will assist Dokken in this study.

The Newt Brigade was formed by Chileno Valley ranchers Sally and Mike Gale when they discovered the newts were being run over on rainy nights. Over the past four years, more than 70 people have volunteered to move the newts and other animals off the road on rainy nights. Over 10,000 newts have been rescued in this way, although many are still killed.

The study will be carried out over the next 12 months, and will consider such road modifications as tunnels under the road, raising sections of the road, and other alternatives. Once the study is completed, and an optimal solution is developed, further funding will be sought to implement it. The study is being done in full cooperation with the Marin County Department of Public Works, with the encouragement of Supervisor Dennis Rodoni, who represents the area.

Since implementing a solution to this problem will take at least a few years, volunteers who are interested in helping move the newts on rainy nights are encouraged to sign up at the Newt Brigade website: www.chilenovalleynewtbrigade.org.

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