

# The Sonoma County Equestrian Community's Reaction to Wildfires: an Ethnographic Study

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**Research Question:** This study examines how the equestrian community employed social capital during the evacuation period of the Tubbs and Preseley fires in Sonoma County in October 2017.

**Background:** Forms of social capital include

- Bonding: attachments between individuals such as relationships between close friends or family, high trust levels
- Bridging: relationships between individuals of social groups, thin trust and reciprocity
- Linking: ties between individuals and larger corporate, political, or social groups, lower levels of reciprocity

**Methods:** In-depth interviews with six members of the equestrian community



## Emily [West Santa Rosa]

- House and animals evacuated by friends while out of town
- Moved animals to a privately owned campground, then to a private barn
- Used bonding and bridging to evacuate her horses



*Fires rage in Sonoma County*

## Monica [West Santa Rosa]

- Horse care expert, evacuated herself and others
- Cared for many sick animals during evacuation and contacted outside help
- Used bonding, bridging, and linking to help horses and families

## Robin [East Santa Rosa]

- Operates a ranch near Santa Rosa
- Volunteers evacuated horses from her facility to a public center, then to a private barn
- Was able to use bonding, bridging, and linking to evacuate and recover from the fires



*The Sonoma County Fairgrounds during the evacuations*

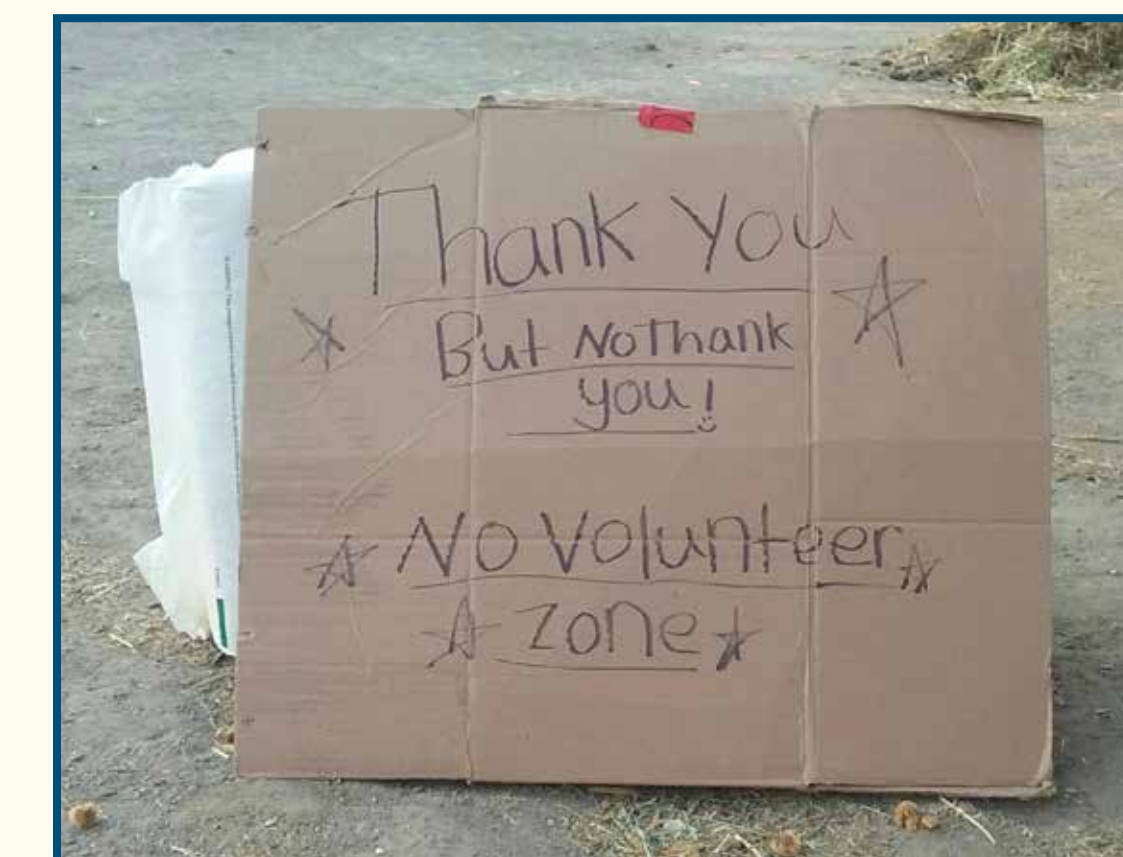
## Erin [South Santa Rosa]

- Evacuated her horses to a public facility
- Helped others in need because of her connections of bonding and bridging
- Used bonding, bridging, and linking in evacuation

## Lauren [East Santa Rosa]

- Was able to evacuate thirty-six horses from her barn
- Forced entry of a public facility under duress
- Volunteers to keep those horses healthy during the evacuation period
- Used bonding and bridging to bring volunteers together

*Barns try to keep their horses safe at evacuation centers*



## Sonya [South Santa Rosa]

- Evacuated her horse and cared for others at a public center
- Bonding and bridging were used to keep her horse safe

## Conclusion

- Bonding was necessary to gain access to private properties with under fifteen horses, or to privately owned campgrounds
- Bridging was necessary to gain access to private properties with over fifteen horses, or to public facilities
- Linking was sufficient to gain access to public facilities

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