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Funding OK'd to restore Bridgeport Covered Bridge



The Bridgeport Covered Bridge, above, will be fully restored and reopened due to an allocation of \$1.3 million in California's final budget to pay for the work.

Fans of the historic Bridgeport Covered Bridge rejoiced at the news today that Gov. Jerry Brown approved California's final budget, which allocates \$1.3 million to immediately start work to fully restore and reopen the bridge.

"Because we joined together as a community and made our voice heard in Sacramento, the Bridgeport Covered Bridge will receive the attention it needs so that it may be enjoyed for generations to come," said Nevada County Supervisor Hank Weston, whose district includes this state and national landmark, considered the longest single-span wooden bridge in the world.

Members of the grass roots campaign committee known as Save Our Bridge mobilized the community to contact state legislators and the governor throughout the months-long state budget process.

As a result, hundreds of letters, calls and emails flooded the state Capitol, and local elected officials and community leaders made multiple pilgrimages to Sacramento to advocate for the iconic historic structure built in 1862.

"We have demonstrated once again how powerful a force a united community can be," said Caleb Dardick, executive director of the South Yuba River Citizens League.

“I am so proud of the hard working members of the Save Our Bridge Committee led by the South Yuba River Park Association and including the Bear Yuba Land Trust, the Chambers of Commerce, elected leaders, State Parks staff, and many concerned citizens. We proved that people can save the bridge.”

The bridge has been closed since 2011 when the Department of Parks and Recreation closed it to pedestrian traffic after an engineering survey found severe and unsafe structural problems.

Parks staff will begin the bridge stabilization project this fall, according to District Superintendent Matt Green. The approved funding includes \$318,000 for the initial planning and permitting and \$1 million of Proposition 84 funds for restoration.

“Because of the incredible efforts of our entire community, this irreplaceable resource and property of the citizens of California may now be restored to its proper condition,” said Dave Anderson, president of the South Yuba River Park Association.

“On behalf of our committee, I would like to thank the governor, and our state representatives, Sen. Jim Nielsen and Assemblymember Brian Dahle. I would also like to acknowledge the budget subcommittees and Catherine Freeman for their critical support. Most of all, I want to single out State Park Superintendent Matthew Green, who has been an exemplary public servant and partner to our community.”

“Now we must stay on top of the restoration project to make sure our iconic bridge is reopened as soon as possible because for the past three years now, we have seen children and their families come to visit the Bridgeport Covered Bridge, only to be turned away from truly experiencing this historical treasure,” said Doug Moon, chairman of the Save Our Bridge Committee.

The fight to save the bridge united Nevada County politically when the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, Grass Valley and Nevada City’s city councils and the Truckee Town Council all approved unanimous resolutions urging state lawmakers to support restoring and reopening the bridge.

“Our state parks are critical to our local economy and appreciated by residents and visitors, alike. We thank the state Legislature and governor for including these funds in the budget,” said Nevada City Mayor Sally Harris.

Grass Valley Mayor Dan Miller concurred, saying, “The Bridgeport Bridge is an important part of California’s history, and we must do all that is reasonably necessary for its preservation and enjoyment.”

The South Yuba River State Park attracts up to 890,000 annual visitors, and people from all over the world come to see Bridgeport, an important Gold Rush-era toll bridge on the Virginia Turnpike built in 1862 by sawmill owner David Wood.

For more information about the bridge, visit www.southyubariverstatepark.org.

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