



Stephen Roberson
sroberson@theunion.com

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Gov. Brown's budget proposal includes Combie cleanup, Bridgeport facelift

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A county reservoir may be getting a much-needed cleanup and local landmark is getting a potential facelift.

Gov. Jerry Brown on Friday released his 2017 state budget proposal, which includes a \$6.13 million investment for the Nevada Irrigation District's Sediment and Mercury Removal Project and a \$3.226 million allocation to restore the Bridgeport Bridge on the south fork of the Yuba River in the South Yuba River State Park.

NID's Combie Reservoir project would address mercury contamination in California headwaters and improve water quality, water storage and fish habitat.

The project focuses on the governor's Water Action Plan and is designed to restore water storage capacity in the existing reservoir while removing mercury and improving conditions downstream for aquatic habitat. It also meets the Proposition 13 goals by removing and treating mercury contamination from abandoned upstream mines in the Bear River watershed.

The Bridgeport Bridge, the longest single span covered bridge in existence according to Nevada County's website, has been closed to vehicular traffic since 1972 and pedestrian traffic since 2011.

Funding will be allocated through the Department of Parks and Recreation's State Building Program Expenditures.

The original estimate in 2014-15 to restore the bridge was \$1.3 million. Following an extensive assessment, however, the price tag climbed to \$3.9 million.

California State Parks Sierra District Chief Ranger Matt Green said the proposed renovation would restore pedestrian traffic but not vehicular traffic.

“It’s an icon in California history and Nevada County history,” Green said. “It’s a bridge that links the historic Virginia Turnpike. It’s a bridge that links a lot of concepts, ideas and accomplishments.”

Reached late Friday shortly after the governor’s budget proposal was released, Green did not have information readily available for how the nearly \$700,000 gap between the estimated costs and the state’s allocation will be bridged.

Green credited Save Our Bridge Campaign Committee Chairman Douglas Moon and Nevada County District IV Supervisor Hank Weston for spearheading efforts to renovate the bridge. The South Yuba River Citizens League was also credited for its efforts.

“It’s a major accomplishment between the public and private sector,” he said.

To contact reporter Stephen Roberson, email sroberson@theunion.com or call 530-477-4236.