

Submitted to The Union

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Nevada County community urged to send governor letters in final push to 'Save Our Bridge'



Water raging under the Covered Bridge at Bridgeport. Annita Kasparian.

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As the state budget's June deadline approaches, a local group known as the Save Our Bridge Campaign Committee is urging the community to write letters to Gov. Jerry Brown in a final push to save the covered bridge at Bridgeport.

"We are so close to achieving the necessary funding to save our bridge. We now need everyone to write the governor and let him know how important saving this historic iconic bridge is to our community," said Doug Moon, chairperson of the Save Our Bridge Committee.

Bridgeport supporters are encouraged to call the governor's office or send letters, emails or faxes no later than June 13.

In his 2014-2015 budget proposal, Brown set aside \$1.261 million to restore and reopen the bridge. The bridge spanning the South Yuba River and part of the South Yuba River State Park system has been closed to foot traffic since 2011 when it was deemed structurally unsound and unsafe.

Already, earlier letter-writing campaigns have proven effective ways of communicating to lawmakers the strong regional support for restoring the Gold Rush era toll bridge at Bridgeport, a state and federally recognized landmark.

This spring, the State Assembly and the Senate Budget Subcommittees on Resources voted to support Brown's proposal for full funding of Bridgeport restoration.

The intent of this latest round of letter writing is to remind the governor to adopt conforming language that mirrors the actions already taken by legislators and approve \$1 million from Proposition 84 funds to fully fund restoration of the bridge in 2014-2015.

This will ensure that funding will be available through the various stages of stabilization, permitting and full restoration.

"We are approaching the budget finish line and it is critical that Gov. Jerry Brown hears from the community that we want the Bridgeport Covered Bridge fully funded now," said Caleb Dardick, SYRCL's Executive Director.

Stabilization of the bridge went out to bid this week and is scheduled to begin the day after Labor Day once a qualified bridge contractor is found.

With warm, summer-like conditions in recent weeks, the park is experiencing higher than normal attendance at the beaches near the Bridgeport crossing.

This weekend, in addition to letter writing, Save Our Bridge committee members suggest a fun and easy way to show support for Bridgeport — snap "selfies" with the bridge as a backdrop.

These “selfies” — photographs of oneself with smartphones — can then be posted to Governor Brown’s Facebook and Twitter pages and South Yuba River State Park Association’s Facebook page.

South Yuba River State Park is a substantial contributor to the region’s economy and Bridgeport — the longest single span covered bridge in the world — is a major draw to the county.

According to the Department of Parks and Recreation, this park attracts up to 890,000 visitors each year.

Securing funding for stabilization is imperative this year with the threat of an El Niño season on the way. World Weather Watch predicts a 52% - 66% probability of El Niño developing this fall. A rise in the river could cause the bridge to collapse.

“Please make your voice heard. Contact Gov. Brown today,” Moon said.

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