



M E M O R A N D U M
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
County of Placer

TO: Board of Supervisors

DATE: February 16, 2021

FROM: Leah Rosasco, Senior Administrative Aide

SUBJECT: Letter of Support – Removal of State Route 49 Bridge Debris as requested by District 5 Supervisor Cindy Gustafson

ACTION REQUESTED

Approve a letter of support for the project to remove the steel and concrete wreckage of the former State Route (SR) 49 Bridge from the North Fork American River and authorize the Chair to execute the same.

BACKGROUND

In December 1964 the partially-completed Hell Hole Dam failed, releasing a wall of water that washed out the SR 49 Bridge. Since that time the bridge debris has remained in the American River, downstream of the existing SR 49 Bridge within the Auburn State Recreation Area (“Auburn SRA”). At the time the bridge collapsed it was anticipated that the Auburn Dam would be constructed three miles downstream, leaving the debris at the bottom of a reservoir hundreds of feet deep, and the decision was made by Caltrans not to remove the hazardous debris. The Auburn Dam has not been built and there are no plans to resume its construction.

Today the Auburn SRA is a popular recreational destination, and the most popular part of the Auburn SRA is the Confluence area, which includes the stretch of river where the bridge debris lies. The continued presence of this hazardous material constitutes a danger to the safety of the many park visitors who hike, swim, and boat in its vicinity.

Auburn SRA is a tremendous asset to Placer County, enhancing the quality of life for its residents and boosting the Placer County economy. Removal of the hazardous bridge debris will allow visitors to enjoy the natural beauty of the area in a safer environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact as a result of this action.

ATTACHMENTS

Letter of Support

February 8, 2021

Senator Brian Dahle
State Capitol, Room 2054
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

Assemblymember Frank Bigelow
State Capitol, Room 4158
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0005

Assemblymember Megan Dahle
State Capitol, Room 4208
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0001

Re: State Route 49 Bridge Debris Removal Project

Dear Legislators:

The County of Placer wishes to express its strong support for the project to remove the steel and concrete wreckage of the former State Route (SR) 49 Bridge from the North Fork American River. The bridge debris, located just downstream of the rebuilt SR 49 Bridge within the Auburn State Recreation Area (Auburn SRA), constitutes a public safety hazard that needs to be eliminated.

The debris was deposited in the river in December 1964, when the partially completed Hell Hole Dam failed, releasing a wall of water that swept downstream and caused the SR 49 Bridge to be washed away. Shortly after the bridge collapsed the Auburn Dam was authorized to be constructed three miles downstream. Because the construction of the dam would have resulted in the bridge debris resting at the bottom of a reservoir hundreds of feet deep, Caltrans opted not to remove the hazardous debris, which was a sound decision at the time.

Now 56 years later, the Auburn Dam has not been built and there are no plans to resume its construction. In the meantime Auburn SRA has become an enormously popular recreational destination, visited by more than one million people annually and continuing to attract more visitors every year. The most popular part of Auburn SRA is the Confluence area, which

includes the stretch of river where the bridge debris lies. The continued presence of this hazardous material constitutes a danger to the many park visitors who hike, swim, and boat in its vicinity.

Auburn SRA is a tremendous asset to Placer County, enhancing the quality of life for its residents and boosting the Placer County economy. The Placer County seat of Auburn is the gateway through which most visitors to the Confluence area travel to reach the river. We believe it is of vital importance that the hazardous bridge debris that endangers the safety of those visitors be removed as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Robert Weygandt
Chair, Board of Supervisors
Placer County

Cc:

Toks Omishakin, Director
California Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 942873
Sacramento, CA 94276-0001

Amarjeet S. Benipal, District 3 Director
California Department of Transportation
703 B Street
Marysville, CA 95601

