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COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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April 18, 2017

Ms. Julianne Polanco
State Historical Preservation Officer
Office of Historic Preservation
Department of Parks and Recreation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95816

Dear Ms. Polanco,

We write in strong support for the listing of the Albion River Bridge on the National Register of Historic Places. This listing will afford national recognition and prestige for Mendocino County's section of the Pacific Coast Highway. It will also allow the Albion River Bridge to join two other listed bridges along this highway: the Bixby Creek Bridge in Big Sur and the Golden Gate Bridge.

Construction of the Albion River Bridge began in 1943, a few years after completion of two concrete arch bridges built to replace deteriorated timber trestle bridges at Jug Handle Creek (1938) and Russian Gulch (1940). When the United States entered World War II, the new bridge for Albion was still on the drawing board, and all new bridge work had been restricted to "major" California roads. Highway 1 at Albion did not qualify as such.

However, after major lobbying efforts by coastal residents, businesses and governments, the design work was finally authorized to continue by order of the War Production Board in 1942. Ultimately, this led to replacement of an existing deteriorating timber deck over timber truss bridge and to the elimination of its mile of dangerous, meandering access roadways.

The revised design replaced the originally planned-for redwood with a relatively new product, pressure-treated Douglas Fir. Wauna Lumber Company of Wauna, Oregon shipped 829,000 board feet of this lumber to Albion. It was thought at the time that this new wood preservation process would allow the bridge to remain stable for approximately 20 years. Instead, it has lasted more than 70 years!

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Caltrans' recent rehabilitation projects, along with the original sensitive design, fine construction and excellent maintenance will likely allow the bridge to continue to serve the public for years into the future.

According to Caltrans District 1 Project Manager Frank Demling, the agency "already treats the bridge as though it is listed" in the National Register, and will not hinder its replacement, if found necessary. He adds that should a replacement project go forward in the future, Caltrans will take the appropriate steps to maintain recognition of the unique historic importance of the bridge.

We urge your support for the nomination of the Albion River Bridge for the National Register of Historic Places.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John McCowen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "McCowen" clearly distinguishable.

John McCowen, Chair
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors