Save Our Bridge Campaign Update!
SUCCESSFUL FIRST STEP!

As you are probably aware by now, funds to restore the bridge have been proposed in Governor Brown’s 2014-2015 budget. The funding is now moving through the State budget process which has many steps until final approval in June 2014. The first hurdle was the State Senate Budget Subcommittee hearing held on March 20th in Sacramento. A strong delegation of S.O.B. supporters attended the hearing. Nevada County Supervisor Hank Weston, Nevada City Councilman Robert Bergman, and SYRPA President Dave Anderson all spoke at the hearing and were very well received. Also attending the hearings were Mickey Springer, Doug and Shirley Moon. The Cities of Grass Valley, Nevada City and Truckee Mayors all signed a joint letter urging passage of funds for SOB, as did the Nevada County Economic Resource Council. The Subcommittee definitely knew who we were due to all of the emails, phone calls and letters from all of you!!

To all of our surprise, the State Senate Budget Subcommittee approved the staff recommendation to allocate $1 million for the bridge this next fiscal year out of Proposition 84 funding. A big win in round one of the budget process! The next step is the State Assembly Budget Subcommittee hearing to be held April 23. We again are sending a delegation to this hearing and need your continued support. See the revised letter to the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on page #3. Please take a few minutes to call, fax or write the Chairman to encourage him to pass the same measure as the Senate.

Thank you so much for your help with this important project!

Doug Moon
IT’S NEVER TOO LATE..
To Renew Your SYRPA Membership for 2014

Your continued membership in SYRPA is essential in keeping the South Yuba River State Park running and enjoyable for everyone. If you haven’t already renewed your membership, please take a minute to send in your check. Also, please consider asking your friends, neighbors, and relations to become members! Thank you for your past support of our organization and we hope you will continue supporting SYRPA in 2104.

* Annual Individual Membership: $20
* Annual Family Membership: $25
* Lifetime Individual Membership: $150
* Lifetime Family Membership: $200
* Annual Small Business Sponsor: $50 (up to 5 employees)
* Annual Business Sponsor: $100

Make Checks Payable To:
SYRPA ATTN: Membership
P.O. Box 1658
Penn Valley, CA 95946

HELP WANTED!!

We are in dire need of Docents at the Park! If you are a SYRPA member and not trained as a Docent, PLEASE consider offering your time and talents to help staff our many activities at the Park. We need help in the Visitor Center, Wild Flower walks, Gold Panning, Greeters, Barn Tours and Trail Rovers. Please call:
Paul Keasberry 530-432-1947
or
Ranger Dan Youngren: 530-432-2546

President’s Message

What a quarter this has been! We have so many things happening that I’ve had a difficult time keeping them straight. Let’s start with the one that we are all most concerned about, our iconic covered bridge. Although its restoration is still out in the future, some important progress has been made. The Phase 1 effort, stabilization, has been funded and the work is scheduled to be performed in the Fall of this year. I will feel much better when that task has been completed.

As you know we have a committee to lead our “Save Our Bridge” efforts. That committee has members of SYRPA, The South Yuba River Citizens’ League (SYRCL), Bear Yuba River Land Trust, Chambers of Commerce and others all participating and working hard to save our treasured bridge. It is truly a community effort. Although our first efforts were focused on raising funds for the restoration of the bridge, the focus shifted radically when the Governor’s Proposed Infrastructure Plan was published in February. Amazingly, it contained a line item for our bridge with sufficient funding for the bridge restoration. We are now, as you should know, on a campaign to communicate with our legislators and the budget committees to ensure that that line item remains intact, included in the budget when it is voted on in June and even accelerated so that the work can be done earlier. We will have representatives at the Senate and Assembly budget hearings in March and April. If you haven’t responded to the recently sent Action Alert I would ask that you please do so now. **See the next page for a sample letter, address and contact information where to send****

We have already been informed from Sacramento that our efforts are having an impact.

We have started planning our next Spring Fundraiser to generate money to be used for our continuing mission to provide financial and interpretive support for our park. We use our funds to print and distribute brochures for the public, training materials for our docents, restoring park features such as our 1927 gas station and many other way to ensure a pleasant and informative visit for our park visitors. Although we are in initial planning, set aside the day on May 8th for this event to be held in the Bridgeport District of the park including fine appetizers and musical entertainment. Further details and reservation information will be distributed soon. Please save the date!

Wildflower season is in full bloom. Wildflower walks will be conducted every Saturday and Sunday during the season. Don't miss the opportunity to experience the spectacular views and beautiful flowers on the Buttermilk Bend trail. See you in the park.

Dave Anderson
SAMPLE LETTER ~~ SEND BY APRIL 19th TO ENSURE HE GETS THE MESSAGE:

The Honorable Richard Bloom  
Chairman, Assembly Budget Sub 3  
State Capitol, Room 2179  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Honorable Assemblyman Bloom,

RE: Support for funding for the Bridgeport Covered Bridge Restoration Project in the 2014-15 Budget

An important California Gold Rush era icon is threatened and needs your help. Our community has worked tirelessly to raise awareness and funding needed to restore and reopen the historic Bridgeport Covered Bridge at the South Yuba River State Park. In 2011 the Department of Parks and Recreation closed the bridge to pedestrian traffic after an engineering survey found severe and unsafe structural problems. Engineers estimate it will cost over $1 million to restore this State Park landmark, which is the longest single span wooden covered bridge in the world.

I am writing you today to request your support for the complete Bridgeport Covered Bridge Restoration Project. The State Senate Budget Sub-committee passed a measure on March 20, 2014 which allocated one million dollars from Proposition 84 funds. This amount plus the $545,000 Federal Grant and $60,000 in donations is the full amount that the California Department of Parks and Recreation has estimated for the project.

Phase 1 of the project is funded and is shovel-ready, scheduled to take place in 2014. Phase 2 still needs a technical and design plan prepared and it will be shovel-ready well in time for the 2015-2016 Budget and as such, we seek to accelerate the scheduled funding for this project.

We are grateful for the Governor’s and Senate Budget Sub-committee’s commitment to this project. We urge you to support this proposal and fund the project this budget year, as this project is urgently needed so the Park can resume contributing substantial funds to the region’s economy. Tourism is vital to the Nevada County area, and we can’t afford to wait any longer while this project languishes. Should the State emerge from the drought with any significant rainfall, the river that this bridge crosses could rise and damage or even wash away this venerable and historic structure. Time is of the essence in this particular case.

We would ask you support this budget proposal as written in your upcoming sub-committee hearing.

The fate of Bridgeport, a symbol of California’s historic legacy, and a significant engineering accomplishment to the world, is now in your hands. According to DPR, this park attracts up to 890,000 visitors supporting the local economy. We have unanimous support from our local elected officials. The City Councils of Grass Valley, Nevada City and Truckee along with Nevada County Supervisors have all written resolutions in favor of the bridge restoration project urging lawmakers to support this critical work.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

[Your Name and address]
Bird walks at Bridgeport
With Bill Cortright

Our resident “birder”, Bill Cortright, will be leading bird walks again this year! Here is a schedule of birds you might expect to see on the walks.

Meet on Saturday mornings:
8:00am; at the Kneebone Cemetery

BIRDS EXPECT TO SEE:

Apr 19: Cliff Swallows, Wren Tits, Bald Eagles, Violet Green Swallow, Oak Tit Mice, Red Shouldered Hawk
May 10: Yellow Breasted Chats, Yellow Warblers, Bald Eagles, Ash Throated Flycatcher, Western Tanager, Nuttal’s Woodpecker
June 14: Black Headed Grosbeaks, Bald Eagles, Western Kingbirds, downy Woodpecker, Violet Green Swallows, Bullock’s Oriole
July 12: Olive Sided Flycatcher, Lark Sparrow, Yellow Warbler, Yellow Breasted Chats, Western Tanager, Great Blue Heron
Oct 18: American Dipper, Phainopepla, Red Breasted Sapsucker, Yellow Rump (Audubon) Warbler, Kingfisher, White Crowned Sparrow
Dec 13: Acorn Woodpeckers, Wren Tit, Nuttal’s Woodpecker, Common Meraganser, Fox Sparrow, Black Phoebe, Song Sparrow

Submitted by Bill Cortright

Supervising Ranger Report
Spring 2014

Wildflowers, rain, green grass, budding oak trees, insects splattering on the windshield – it must be spring. It’s nice to even print the word “rain”, and hopefully we will continue to get spring showers for another month or two to green-up the river corridor.

It has been a very busy couple of months for the South Yuba River staff. We’ve been working toward getting ready for summer, with the focus on volunteer training. Ranger Dan, Ranger Greg (Empire Mine) and the rest of the ranger staff have been hard at work preparing and presenting this year’s volunteer training to nearly 50 new VIP’s, some of who will be working at Bridgeport. We’ve also been busy setting up training for new River Ambassadors, the group of volunteers from the South Yuba River Citizen’s League who work in partnership with State Parks. You will see them on the weekends, starting May 24, at the various crossings, helping teach people about protecting the river environment.

There are a number of changes that you may see this spring and summer at the park. The rangers will be hiring two new park aides to assist operations at Bridgeport, and might be helping out in the visitor center as well. We are also very hopeful about being able to finally have high-speed Internet at the park, and with that, the ability to accept credit/debit cards for payment of parking fees. We are also installing a couple of new bulletin boards, both at Bridgeport and at 49 Crossing. Ranger Marc will be working with the volunteers to keep the information current.

It’s really beginning to look like work on the bridge will begin very soon. As of right now, the funding is falling into place, and the initial work on stabilizing the bridge should go out to bid in April, with a start-work date immediately after Labor Day. Just know that until you see someone with a hardhat and a hammer, things could change. This is a large project, and many pieces need to fall into place. Please continue to offer any support you can to the Save the Bridge campaign so that we can enjoy this landmark for years to come.

Enjoy everything that spring offers at the river, like the wildflower and bird hikes, and the beauty and sound of the water flow. It’s beautiful here, and I hope you’ll come down to enjoy it!

Don Schmidt
MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Spring Fund Raiser

May the 8th – Save the date!

On Thursday, May 8th, 4:00pm – 7:00pm, there will be a fund raiser at South Yuba River State Park sponsored by SYRPA. Proceeds from this event will go to visitor programs, tours and facilities. This will be a catered event with delicious appetizers, wine, beer and soda held under the shade of the big tree by the Gas Station in front of the barn. You will be entertained by Jed Dixon, local vocalist, with his zany humor and musical talent.

Cost is $50 per person. Reservations required.

Contact: Jean Wilson 265-8401, Diane Marten 432-5012 or Don Denton 432-1888.

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“State of the Yuba”

The South Yuba River Citizen’s League, “SYRCL” is celebrating Earth Day Tuesday April 22nd with a “State of the Yuba” event to be held at Peace Lutheran Church 828 W Main St, Grass Valley, from 5:30pm -8:30pm. This is bound to be a great event and SYRCL has graciously offered the Save Our Bridge Campaign a table at the event. We will be asking attendees to sign post cards of the bridge to be hand delivered the next day to the State Assembly Budget Sub-committee in Sacramento by our delegation. Please come by, join in the festivities and personally sign a note to our legislators.

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Grass Valley “Gold Rush Days”

The Grass Valley Downtown Association is sponsoring “GOLD RUSH DAYS” on Mill and Main Streets in Downtown Grass Valley on June 20-21 from 10:00am—5:00pm. There are two parts of the event of special interest of SYRPA members and friends:

♦ SYRPA will be staffing the Gold Panning Demonstration troughs adjacent to the State Parks and Empire Mine exhibits. We will need all of our Gold Panners that weekend!

Watch for a special request from Denia. The Gold Panning exhibit this year is being sponsored by two local businesses: Future Generations, Nevada County’s most complete baby store. They are located at 130 Mill Street, Grass Valley or at www. futuregenerationsbaby.com Also SierraFoodWineArt: A Lifestyle Magazine. www.sierraculture.com

♦ A special fund raising event will be held during Gold Rush Days for the Save Our Bridge Campaign. A “Jail and Bail” area will be set up on Main Street, sponsored by our local radio station; KNCO. Stop by and help “bail out” arrestees to help raise funds to restore and reopen our historic bridge.
WILDFLOWERS ABUNDANT AT THE PARK!!

The wildflower season began on March 8 and the first three weekends have been well attended. Despite the dry winter there is a good display of flowers in bloom with large numbers of Tufted Poppies throughout the trail and a hill after French Corral Creek that is covered with the beautiful and delicate Bird's Eye Gilia. Not much sign of our signature Narrow Leaf Lupine yet but with rain in the forecast there is always hope.

In addition to the weekend hikes there are also Pt. Defiance hikes scheduled for April 8 and April 29 at 9:30 am. Special weekday hikes are provided too. On March 20th a special tour for the Folsom Garden Club was conducted by Sue Graf. Her always lively presentation ensured that twenty one flower enthusiasts thoroughly enjoyed their hike and learned some of the Park history along the way. She will be providing a hike for home schooled children at the end of March.

A new wildflower monitoring program was started this year. Early in the year as our docents witnessed the driest winter on record they were concerned that there might not even be a wildflower season. So with the guidance of docent Heather Barnes a monitoring program was established. The goal was to designate points on Buttermilk Bend trail which would be photographed throughout this season and hopefully future seasons as well. The team of Heather Barnes, Karen Loro, Darlene Ward and others designated the spots, are taking photographs and compiling the data.

The wildflower program has many dedicated docents who work hard before, during and after the season. We have many longtime docents and an enthusiastic group of newer docents going out on hikes learning about the flowers and plants from the veterans. Our group always welcomes new docents. If you think you would be interested in joining the wildflower program just join in on one of the walks on Saturday or Sunday at 11:00 am. Be sure to introduce yourself to the docents. You'll have a great walk along the beautiful South Yuba and learn a bit about the flowers that cover the hillsides with color. You'll get to witness first hand what an enjoyable program it is.

I would like to thank all the Wildflower Docents who have joyfully guided visitors on hikes along the river and over the hill to Pt. Defiance for the last four years. Your talent and hard work ensured success even while I wasn't always sure what I was doing. I would like to acknowledge two docents who were a great help this year in the area of publicity, thank you Rae Lerche and Cheryl Pirtle. And I must not forget to thank both Ranger Dan for his leadership and Ranger Marc for his assistance especially with the wonderful flyers provided this year. Although I will be stepping down from the position of Coordinator I hope to continue as one of the worker bees next year. Thank you again for all you have done to make the program a success.

Ruth Peterson
HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE
The 1868 Hay Press

The historic hay press on display in the Bridgeport barn was built in 1868 by Allen John Weldon at Quincy, Plumas County, CA. Weldon left New York in April 1850 for California via the Panama Isthmus. He began mining on the Yuba River and later went into Plumas County. Before leaving Plumas, he and two of his brothers, purchased the Illinois Ranch about five miles east of the present site of Quincy. In December, 1851, he returned to New York, sold his business interests there and the following June, accompanied by his wife, Lucina Morey Weldon, and son John, a child of two years, started again for California. They crossed the Isthmus on mule back during drenching rains, boarded the Winfield Scott for a 17-day voyage to San Francisco and arrived at Illinois Ranch in August 1852. The winter of 1852-53 was very severe, the storms beginning in November and lasting until late in the spring. Provisions were scarce. During the late fall, Jim Beckwourth arrived in Quincy with groceries, and the Weldons bought an ample supply. In 1854, Weldon sold his interest in the Illinois Ranch and bought a mine on Richmond Hill, near Saw Pit Flat, where he mined. In July 1855 he purchased a farm two miles east of Quincy, where he and his family lived continuously until he passed away on August 2, 1885. Mrs. Weldon lived until October 2, 1911. Both are buried in the Quincy cemetery.

Early in 1868 Weldon began preparations to build a hay press. He had served an apprenticeship in a shipyard in New York and this experience enabled him to select suitable material and to work skillfully with tools. Weeks were spent by Weldon and his son John, then in his teens, searching the hills for an oak tree with size, length, straightness, and freedom from decay, knots, wind-checks and other imperfections so the thread of the screw would withstand the pressure to be placed upon it. The press design was done entirely by Mr. Weldon, as was the selecting of the material. It was difficult to obtain the proper tools. When the log was brought to the farm, Sam Dorithy, a carpenter, was hired to assist in the hewing to reduce it to a perfect cylinder. Cutting the thread of the screw was done by Weldon or under his supervision. Mr. Dorithy and a Mr. Dahlberg helped Weldon crafting the rest of the press structure. The press proved a success and hay was baled in it for years and sent to the mines of Virginia City packed on the backs of mules. (At about the same time freight wagons crossing the Bridgeport Covered Bridge were destined also for Virginia City.) Two bales were placed on the back of each mule. The weight of a bale ranged from 100 to 165 pounds, and the load on each mule was graded according to the strength of the animal. The press was sold about 1877 by Weldon to George Penman and was moved to Penman's farm near Spring Garden, Plumas County, California.

W.D. Thomas, a Sacramento lumberman, arranged to exhibit the press at the May 22-28, 1922 'Days of 49' in Sacramento. According to an October 1933 article in the Sacramento Bee, Thomas was persuaded by Curator Harry Peterson to present the press to the State in July 1922. Thomas had visited Spring Garden in Plumas Co looking for lumber sources in 1920 and perhaps saw the press at the Penman's Spring Garden ranch at that time. Thomas worked for the Superior Lumber & Fuel Co, Sacramento, and for Brown & Thomas, Sacramento, in the 1920s. The press has been on display at Sutter's Fort and Plumas-Eureka State Parks, Plumas County Museum, and now at Bridgeport.

Timeline
- 1868 Allen John Weldon builds the hay press
- 1877 Weldon sells the press to John Penman
- 1922 W. D. Thomas exhibits the press at the Days of 49 in Sacramento
- 1922 The press is donated to the State of California and exhibited at Sutter’s Fort
- 1959 The press is moved to Plumas-Eureka State Park
- 1987 The press is moved to the Loyalton Museum and restored by the Loyalton high school woodshop program
- 2006 The press is moved to South Yuba River State Park

In November 2013 Tim and Darlene Buckhout of Clio, CA, relatives of George Penman, visited Bridgeport to see the press and discuss its history. They were joined by Donna Jones, DPR Curator, Don Denton, Barn Interpreter, and Steve Pauly, History Coordinator. Donna was involved with the transfer from the Plumas Museum to Bridgeport. Pictured (l to r) are Donna Jones, Darlene Buckhout, Tim Buckhout, Don Denton and Steve Pauly.

References
1. Weldon charcoal portraits, Plumas County Museum, donated by Ann Housley
2. History of a Hay-Press, Mrs. Lillian L. Grove, daughter of A. J. Weldon, 1925
3. Sketch of Hay Press at Sutter’s Fort, E.A. Burbank, Imola, Calif., 1933

Submitted by SYRPA Historian Steve Pauly
NEW CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS PASSES!

CA State Parks has implemented four new passes for the 2014 calendar year. We have added the Surf Explorer Pass, 150th Commemorative Pass, CA Experience Pass, and the historian passport. The surf explorer pass covers most parks in the system, the 150th commemorative covers most parks as well but excludes the southern CA beaches, the CA experience covers mostly northern parks, and the Historian passport covers most of the historic parks of the state. All passes are day use only and will be sold at the Bridgeport visitor center and Empire Mine.

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Pass Details
- All Parks: vehicle day use.
- All Parks, vehicle day use. EXCLUDING Southern CA beaches, Historian Passport included (2014 only) and much like old "Poppy Pass".
- Mostly Nor Cal Parks, vehicle day use.
- Most all State Historic Parks, per person entry, 4 people per card. Card included with the 150th pass 2014 only

Calendar of Events

⇒ **Visitor Center**: Open Thursday through Sunday; 11:00am – 4:00pm
⇒ **Bird walks**: Saturday mornings 8:00am
⇒ **Wildflower walks**: Saturdays and Sundays now through May 11:00am-1:00pm
⇒ **SYRPA Fundraiser** featuring Jeb Dixon: Thursday May 8th: 4:00pm – 7:00pm
⇒ **Gold Panning demonstrations**: Memorial Day – Labor Day: Every Saturday and Sunday: 11:00am -1:00pm
⇒ **Barn Tours**: Memorial Day – Labor Day: Saturdays and Sundays 11:00am – 2:00pm
⇒ **Gold Rush Days**: Saturday and Sunday: June 20th and 21st: Downtown Grass Valley 10:00am – 5:00pm
⇒ **Fall Festival** at Bridgeport: Last Sunday in October: 11:00am -4:00pm