

Dear Neighbor,

I'm writing to you about exciting news regarding a proposed trail that will provide residents who live around Carmel Mission access to the banks of the Carmel River, as well as a bridge that crosses the Carmel River to points beyond.

The bridge will connect to a trail that takes you to the west entrance of Palo Corona Regional Park, and in time, a trail to Monastery Beach and further. Imagine walking to Point Lobos without ever setting foot on pavement once entering the trail at Lausen Ave/Dolores Street.

This project has the added benefit of transforming the unsightly city maintenance yard called Rio Park into Rio Preserve. This area will be left wild and undeveloped. No parking spaces, crowds, or additional traffic—just a trail meandering through the willows and oaks to the river, bridge, and beyond.

And, with the Diocese of Monterey's permission, this project will also open a path through Larson Field to Rio Road—a route that residents in your neighborhood can use as a shortcut to walk to the shops and restaurants in the Crossroads and Barnyard shopping centers.

I'm personally invested in this project because my property borders the proposed trail on Larson Field, and I have a 3rd grader who attends Carmel River School. Currently, my son and many other kids have to walk all the way around the Carmel Mission on the busy and hazardous Rio Road to get to school.

Aside from the benefits for walkers, hikers, and school children, this bridge and the connecting trails will make our neighborhood a more desirable place to live and, in turn, our homes more valuable by giving residents access to the Carmel River, and a bridge that crosses it.

I hope you'll consider the merits of this project and possibly even lend your support to it. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me. In the meantime, take a hike through the white gate between the Carmel Mission and Mission Ranch, and on past the piles of logs and wood chips to the old bridge to see for yourself.

Your neighbor, Paul Bartow

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## ‘BRIDGE TO EVERYWHERE’ COULD BE HUB FOR HIKING NETWORK

By CHRIS COUNTS

AN OLD bridge that crosses Carmel River near the wastewater treatment plant could get a new life as a critical hub for a network of hiking trails if a plan by the Carmel Area Wastewater District gets enough support. Built in the 1930s, the bridge has a sewer pipe running across it, but the pipe is no longer in use.

“This is an idea that’s been kicked around for a long time,” sewer district general manager Barbara Buikema told *The Pine Cone*. “We have all these beautiful trails, and there’s no way to get from one to another.”

According to Buikema, the bridge needs to be refurbished or rebuilt. She estimated the project could cost about \$10 million. The sewer district would be the lead agency.

“We need to have a structural engineer take a look at it to see if the bones are still there,” Buikema said. “We’d also have to make it ADA compliant.”

CAWD officials are hoping the bridge’s historical integrity can be preserved.

“We think the aesthetics of the bridge are important,” the general manager said. “It has a nice vibe we’d like to keep.”

### Mission to beach

The new or refurbished bridge — which Carmel Area Wastewater District officials are calling the “Bridge to Everywhere” — would be part of a trail network that incorporates an old road to the sewage treatment plant, providing walking access between Carmel Mission, Palo Corona Regional Park and Monastery Beach. Eventually, the

trail could be rerouted underneath Highway 1 as part of the Big Sur Land Trust’s ambitious Carmel River Free flood project.

Also, a small park would be established near the bridge. “Property downstream of the bridge is owned by CAWD and the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea, and could be con-



PHOTO/COURTESY CAWD

This image shows what can be done to turn an old bridge and its surrounding land into a park with trail access. The site is located along the Carmel River next to the CAWD sewage treatment plant.

verted into a park,” according to the sewer district website.

Before the bridge work moves forward, the sewer district needs to get a variety of agencies and groups to sign off on it, including the City of Carmel, the Diocese of Monterey, California State Parks, the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District and the Big Sur Land Trust. The wastewater district also met with the California Coastal Conservancy this week to discuss funding.

Buikema said the project has many supporters already, including former Congressman Sam Farr.

“The public is very much in favor of it,” she added. “It’s a really great project that’s going to benefit anybody who likes to hike.”