

Supervisors support plan to upgrade Saxton boat ramp

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The Del Norte County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to support a project that will repair the Saxton Public Boat Ramp on the Smith River.

Supervisors also agreed to have Del Norte County take over maintenance of the public boat ramp after work is completed.

Phillip Barrington, senior environmental specialist with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, told supervisors the state is willing to pay for the upgrades at the location, but only if the county agrees to take over maintenance when the work is done.

The Smith River is a popular destination for fishermen seeking trophy salmon and steelhead,” Barrington said. “As you know, the state record for steelhead,

27 pounds, came out of the Smith River.”

The Saxton boat ramp is very popular because there is easy access from Highway 101 and it is the first location where motorized boats can enter the river. Access upriver from the ramp is off limits to motorized boats because of the wild and scenic rivers destination.

Barrington told supervisors while the location is very popular, it does need a lot of work. The last significant investment in infrastructure at the boat ramp was in 1985.

“It’s been a long time,” Barrington said. “It’s held up pretty well, but it does need a lot of repairs.”

Barrington showed photos of the ramp, saying that the asphalt is degrading, parts of the actual boat ramp is falling apart and the restroom was permanently closed several years ago after a tree fell on it.

The repair work is budgeted at \$806,000 with work scheduled to begin in May 2023. The entire project should be finished by 2025.

“In our concept of this, we have three picnic tables and a covered pavilion in case of inclement weather,” Barrington said.

There would also be bear-proof trash cans, a new restroom facility, new signage as well as ADA compliant parking and trails.

“We think this project is just a dandy project to upgrade a dilapidated facility and expand use of the facility to a wide range of participants,” Barrington said.

Patty McCleary with the Smith River Alliance said the alliance fully support the project.

I’m absolutely delighted we can work with CDFW on the best river in California,” McCleary said. “I’m very delighted with the opportunity to move this forward.”

Barrington said the state is prepared to pay for the work if the county offers support and agrees to the long-term plan of owning and maintaining the facility

“DFW will support the project when they know the property will be maintained 20 years into the future,” Barrington said. “The intention is for Del Norte County to take over and assume all the maintenance costs.”

A motion to send a letter in support of the project and a letter to agree to take over maintenance into the future passed unanimously.