

# Last Chance Grade Summary of October 2017 Community Open House

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**Last Chance Grade**





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# **Last Chance Grade Summary of October 2017 Community Open House**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The “Last Chance Grade” (LCG) is a 3-mile segment of US Highway 101 in Del Norte County, California located between Klamath and Crescent City. Last Chance Grade is an area of highway prone to geological activity. Landslides and road failures have been an ongoing issue for decades and substantial funds have been invested in repairs. The road is currently safe to use, but a long term solution is needed to ensure continued safe and reliable transportation on US 101.

In March 2014, Caltrans established the Last Chance Grade Partnership to create an active, working relationship with the agencies and groups that have management responsibilities for lands and resources that would be directly impacted by any realignment of Highway 101 at Last Chance Grade.

During January 2015, the LCG Partners hosted three community workshops presenting possible alternatives for future study, and provided opportunities for stakeholders and the public to submit input regarding the alternatives. In June 2015, Caltrans completed the Last Chance Grade Feasibility Study which identified a full range of alternatives that could provide a long-term solution. Following the Feasibility Study, Caltrans initiated the preparation of the Project Initiation Document (PID), also referred to as the Project Study Report (PSR), which describes the scope, cost, and potential schedule for a transportation project. The PID also narrows down the number of project alternatives to be studied, which allows for a more efficient design and engineering process. A further set of three community Town Halls in March 2016 allowed the LCG Partners to provide updated project information to the public and to receive additional feedback. The Project Study Report was completed in June 2016.

The conditions at Last Chance Grade are complex and there is no alternative that can be achieved without impacts to the significant natural and cultural resources within the project area. As a result, Caltrans is engaged in extensive activities to ensure coordination with the wide variety of federal, state and local agencies and interests who need to be involved. Caltrans has also been meeting with and providing information to area officials regarding the funding needs of the project. Caltrans is limited in its efforts to advance the planning process until additional funding sources are identified.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

On October 18, 2017, Caltrans hosted a Community Open House at the Del Norte County Fairgrounds in Crescent City, California to inform the community on the status of the project and current efforts to ensure the safety of travelers on Last Chance Grade. The Open House was held in response to stakeholder inquiry as well as Caltrans’ commitment to keeping the community updated on the substantial project progress made since Summer 2016.

## **Outreach Methods**

The Community Open House was promoted and advertised through a variety of methods including:

- Posting and dissemination of flyers
- Posting on dedicated webpage at [www.lastchancegrade.com](http://www.lastchancegrade.com), with update emails to registered users, and on District 1 social media
- Advertisement on Del Norte County Fairgrounds electronic signage
- Press releases and media coverage including local and regional online and print newspapers and radio. Local news coverage received included an article in the *Del Norte TriPLICATE*.



## **Community Open House**

The Community Open House was conducted by Caltrans, with support from agency partners and assistance provided by MIG, Inc. MIG is Caltrans' On-Call contractor whose participation is made available through funding and resources provided through the statewide Public Participation and Engagement Contract.

The Open House was held at the Main Hall of Del Norte County Fairgrounds in Crescent City from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. The venue is an ADA-accessible location.

## **Open House Format**

The Open House began with a PowerPoint presentation by Jaime Matteoli, Caltrans Project Manager for Last Chance Grade. Mr. Matteoli was accompanied by a panel of representatives from partner agencies, including:

- Victor Bjelajac, Superintendent, California State Parks
- Matt Brady, Caltrans District 1 Director
- John Driscoll, District Representative for Congressman Jared Huffman
- Chris Howard, Chairperson, Del Norte County Board of Supervisors
- Matt Schmitz, California Division Director, Project Delivery, Federal Highway Administration
- David Roemer, Deputy Superintendent, Redwood National and State Parks, National Park Service

Note: Larry Depee, Commander, California Highway Patrol, was scheduled to participate but was unable to due to law enforcement priorities at the time of the meeting.

## Presentation

The presentation, as provided by Mr. Matteoli with contributions from several partner agency representatives, included:

- Introduction to the agencies and their representatives taking part in the panel.
- Information on coordination and partnerships working together to improve safety at Last Chance Grade, including the Huffman Stakeholder Group, Last Chance Grade Partner Group, Biological and Cultural Resources Working Groups, and federal, state and local elected officials.
- Details of current and ongoing improvements including repairs to 2016 and 2017 storm damage and other construction work
- Details of monitoring and safety measures
  - Monitoring measures include frequent site checks, the Near Real Time Monitoring System, aerial photography and ground surveys
  - Safety measures include public information, barriers and railing, and paving and grinding to smooth the road surface
- Information on vertical movement at Last Chance Grade's major slides since 2012, and the average movement per year
- A history of funding and project development, including stakeholder collaboration, completed studies and documents, and \$5 million in state funding approved for preliminary geotechnical studies
- Information on status, schedule and details of preliminary geotechnical studies
- Information on pursuit of full funding for the project, including federal and state funding options, proposal development, and likely schedule and phasing, provided by Matt Schmitz of the Federal Highway Administration
- Sources of further information including the Last Chance Grade website address and contact details for Project Manager Jaime Matteoli.

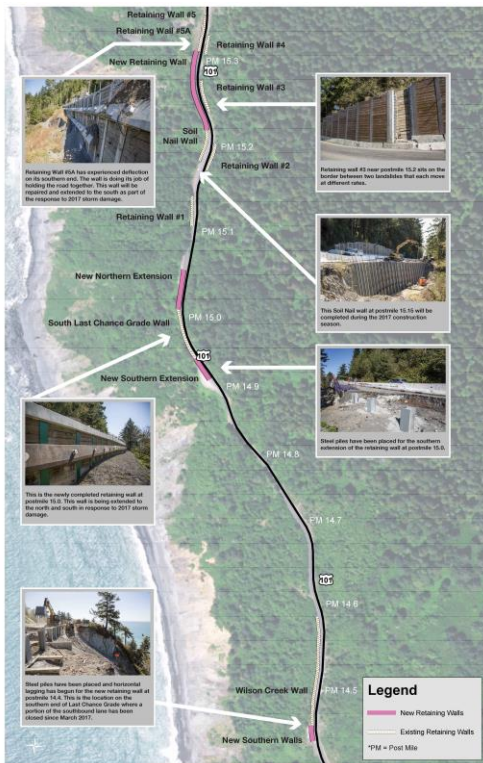


Following the presentation, the panelists introduced themselves, their agencies and their roles in the Last Chance Grade project, and answered questions from participants. Afterwards, participants were welcomed to view the Open House consisting of the following maps and displays:

- **Geotechnical Studies:** Types of geotechnical studies anticipated for Last Chance Grade; results will be used to validate or refine the project alternatives.

In addition to an informational board with a map showing the location of different geologic units in the area, the display featured actual core samples taken at Last Chance Grade.

- **Monitoring the Movement:** Information on how Caltrans actively monitors the roadway conditions at Last Chance Grade, including the near real time monitoring system to aid notification in the event of a drop in the roadway. The map showed the location of all post mile markers, GPS Monitoring Units and existing retaining walls.
- **Project Alternatives:** Map showing the 6 alternative alignments currently being studied; their position in relation to the existing Last Chance Grade alignment, Highway 101, and State and National Parks; and the topology of the region.
- **Storm Damage and Repairs:** A map showing the locations, with accompanying photographs and information, of work to repair storm damage sustained during heavy rains in March 2016 and the winter of 2016/2017.



Last Chance Grade Caltrans and partner staff experts were available at each display to answer questions.

Attendees were also provided with a handout including the Open House agenda and a Comment Card for any additional comments they would prefer to submit in writing. For reproductions of all displays and handouts and the full presentation, please see Appendix A, “Open House Meeting Materials.”

### III. COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE PARTICIPATION AND RESULTS

#### *Community Open House Participation*

More than 30 people from throughout the region signed in with an estimated 40+ attendees at the Community Open House. They represented a variety of organizations and interests, including:

- Area residents, many of whom regularly travel Last Chance Grade
- Local and regional transportation agencies
- Law enforcement agencies
- County and municipal governments
- Fire departments and Community Service Districts
- Regional and local planning staff
- Native American tribal governments
- Environmental organizations
- National and State Parks and natural resources agencies
- Political organizations
- Local and regional Chambers of Commerce



- Local business interests
- Local news media

## **Community Open House Results**

Questions and comments addressed to Caltrans and partner agency panelists included:

- I'm curious about the cost-benefit analysis of the different options for funding from the FHWA, as well as the possible timeline.
  - **Response (FHWA):** This is still being considered. One factor is that extensive realignments are out of bounds for Emergency Relief (ER) funds. "Betterments," which are protective features, such as additional lanes or enhanced access control, may qualify. However, betterments must be clearly economically-justified to receive ER funding. Since they almost always have a higher initial cost, the justification must be based on sufficiently reducing future ER eligible damage, so as not to be throwing good money after bad. The cost-benefit analysis may well show this to be the case.
- At what point will the route to build be chosen?
  - **Response (Caltrans):** A selection won't be made until the environmental impacts of each alternative are fully studied and the Environmental Document is complete. That is estimated to take five to nine years, and will provide a much better sense of the cost for each. At that time, the project team will select a preferred alternative in coordination with agency partners and the Huffman Stakeholder Group.
- Who makes that determination?
  - **Response (Caltrans):** The Caltrans project team will provide recommendations to District 1 Director Matt Brady for approval. Details on impacts and recommendations will be incorporated in the Environmental Document, which will be open to public review.
- It's come to my attention that Caltrans doesn't have a mitigation banking system. There are big environmental issues at stake such as how to mitigate for the loss of ancient trees. You should set up a banking system for the project to work in mitigation costs.
  - **Response (Caltrans):** The risk analysis currently taking place is geotechnical, so it doesn't include mitigation planning. As of July 2018, SB1 will make an additional \$40 million a year available for advance mitigation. The problem is that impacts will vary by alignment, so it's difficult to predict what will be needed before a preferred alternative is selected. We will certainly look for opportunities to mitigate in advance.
- What would the process be if the road were to totally give way?
  - **Response (Caltrans):** Caltrans would immediately begin work to reopen the road through emergency contracts with construction crews. They would cut into the hillside as necessary and hopefully have one lane open to allow traffic within days or weeks. It's acknowledged that this would have serious impacts. However, Caltrans has been working on a risk assessment with world-renowned Geotech experts, who visited the site in July. They gave their opinion that, while

this slide is moving slowly and steadily, it is not likely to collapse altogether and therefore is not a serious safety risk. Caltrans has also improved its capacity to monitor the route and increased its strength and resiliency.

- Considering that all the alternative routes go through the park system, wouldn't it be better to build a tunnel for the whole length of the bypass?
  - **Response (California State Parks):** It's unlikely that a full-length tunnel would work. A long tunnel needs a long clearing and lots of infrastructure, and would still have impacts on trees. We have been considering whether part of current alignment could be replaced by a one-mile tunnel. It's necessary to complete the geotechnical studies that are currently underway to know whether this would work and how it might impact resources. Even tests have impacts, so we must proceed very cautiously.
- Thanks to all and to Caltrans for keeping the road open. I've got a question for Parks: of the six build alternatives, are any **not** acceptable to you?
  - **Responses:**
    - **National Park Service:** We are still open to all six, and don't have a favorite at this time. Once the environmental studies are completed, we'll know more about how specific trees would be affected.
    - **California State Parks:** I second that. We are still assessing impacts.
- When planning the route, consider the presence of the Cascadia Fault. Would it be possible to find a route that would withstand a major quake?
  - **Response (Caltrans):** That's an important question, and one which we'll ask the Geotech experts doing the expert-based risk assessment. Although major quakes are always a risk, construction and design standards are in place to make each solution as strong as possible. The usual practice is to make structures ten times as strong as necessary to withstand quakes.

Participants were encouraged to fill out the comment card on the back of the agenda if they wished to submit further comments or questions, but no comment cards were submitted.



## APPENDIX A: OPEN HOUSE MEETING MATERIALS

### I. Agenda/Comment Card Handout

#### **Last Chance Grade COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE**

**Wednesday, October 18, 2017**

**6:30-8:00 p.m.**

Del Norte County Fairgrounds

Main Hall

421 Highway 101 North

Crescent City, CA

#### **A G E N D A**

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##### **Welcome and Introductions**

Matt Brady, Director, Caltrans District 1

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##### **Presentation and Panel**

Victor Bjelajac, California State Parks

Matt Brady, Caltrans District 1

Larry Depee, California Highway Patrol

John Driscoll, Congress Huffman's office

Chris Howard, Del Norte County Board of Supervisors

Jaime Matteoli, Caltrans District 1

Matt Schmitz, Federal Highway Administration

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##### **Questions and Answers**

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##### **Open House**

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## COMMENT CARD

Please share your comments regarding Last Chance Grade.

Optional:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Info: (Mailing address or email):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation! Please turn this card in at the end of the meeting. You may also return it by mail or email. Please mail to: Caltrans District 1, c/o Jaime Matteoli, 1656 Union Street, Eureka, CA 95501, or email to: [lastchancegrade@dot.ca.gov](mailto:lastchancegrade@dot.ca.gov).

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## II. Displays

### GEOTECHNICAL STUDIES

In May of 2017, Caltrans received approval to fund \$5 Million to perform preliminary geotechnical investigations. This effort will provide information on the subsurface conditions under parts of the six build alternatives. The results of the geotechnical studies will be used to validate or refine the project alternatives.

#### Types of Studies Anticipated for Last Chance Grade



##### Borings

Borings are made to collect physical samples of the subsurface materials. These borings above were collected from locations on Last Chance Grade.

##### Geophysical Explorations

Geophysical explorations are an indirect method of gaining information on the subsurface conditions using special instruments.

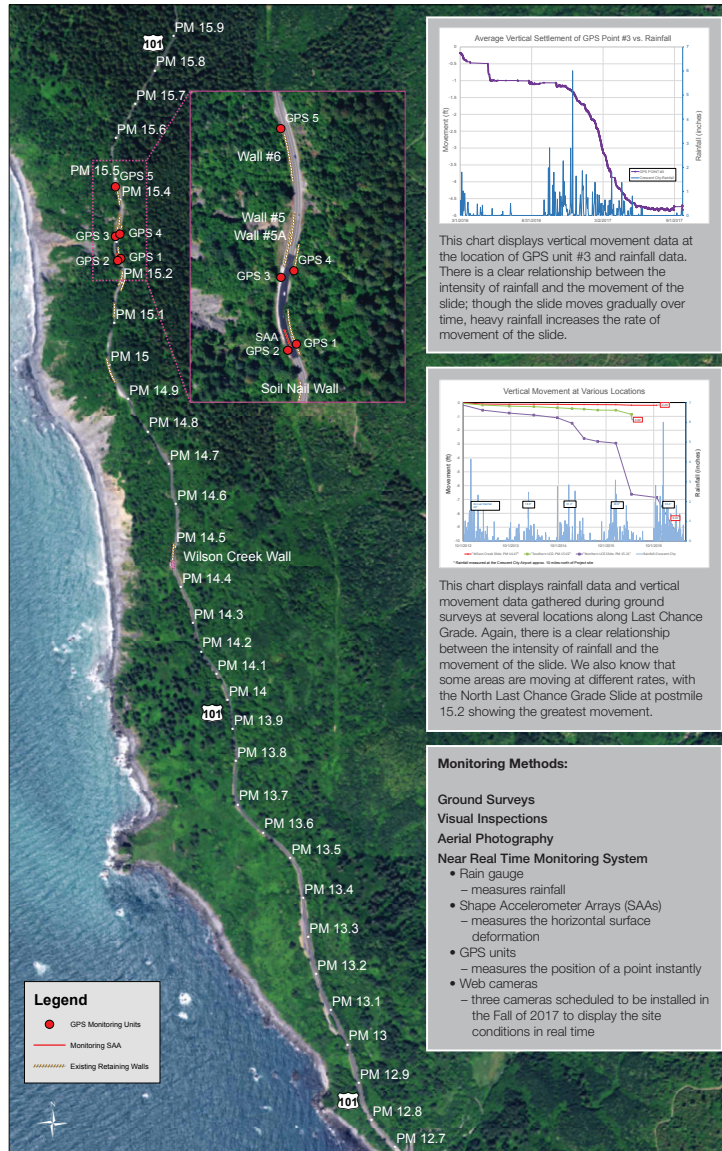


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## MONITORING THE MOVEMENT

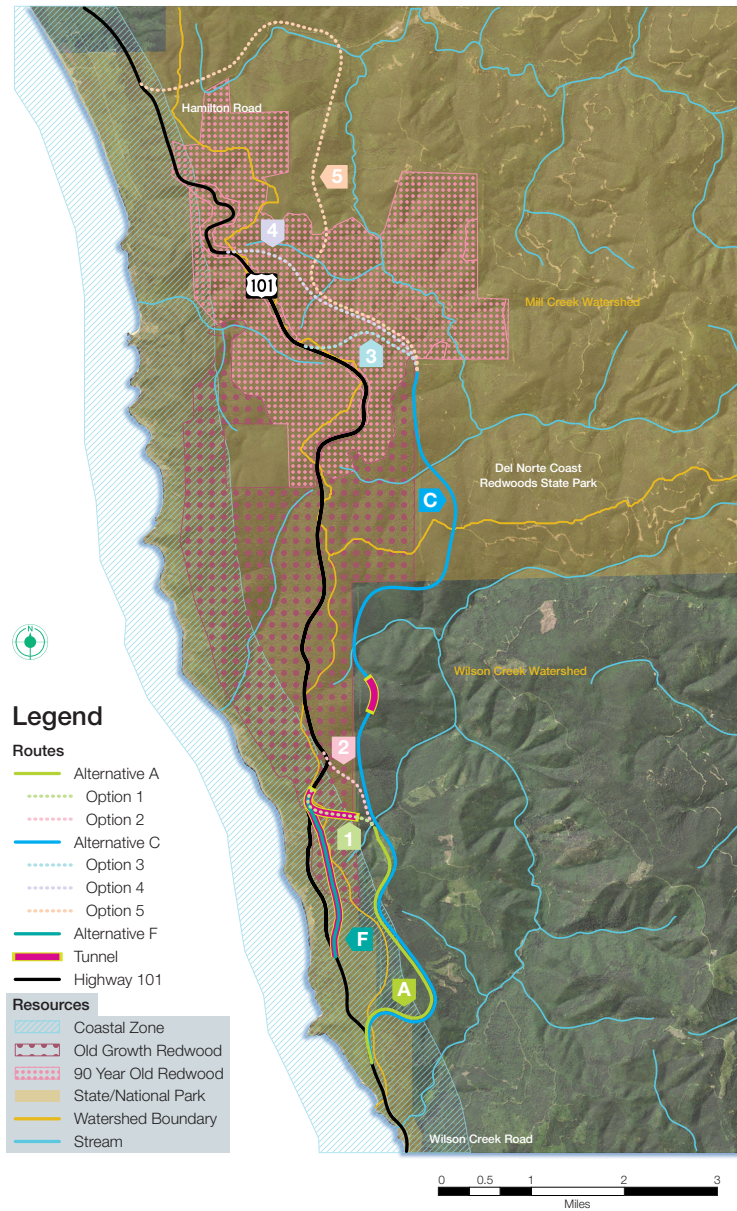
Caltrans actively monitors the roadway conditions at Last Chance Grade to ensure the safety of all users. Caltrans has constructed a near real time monitoring system at Last Chance Grade that aids notifications in the event of a drop in the roadway. Plans are in place to respond to any event that may occur.



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# PROJECT ALTERNATIVES



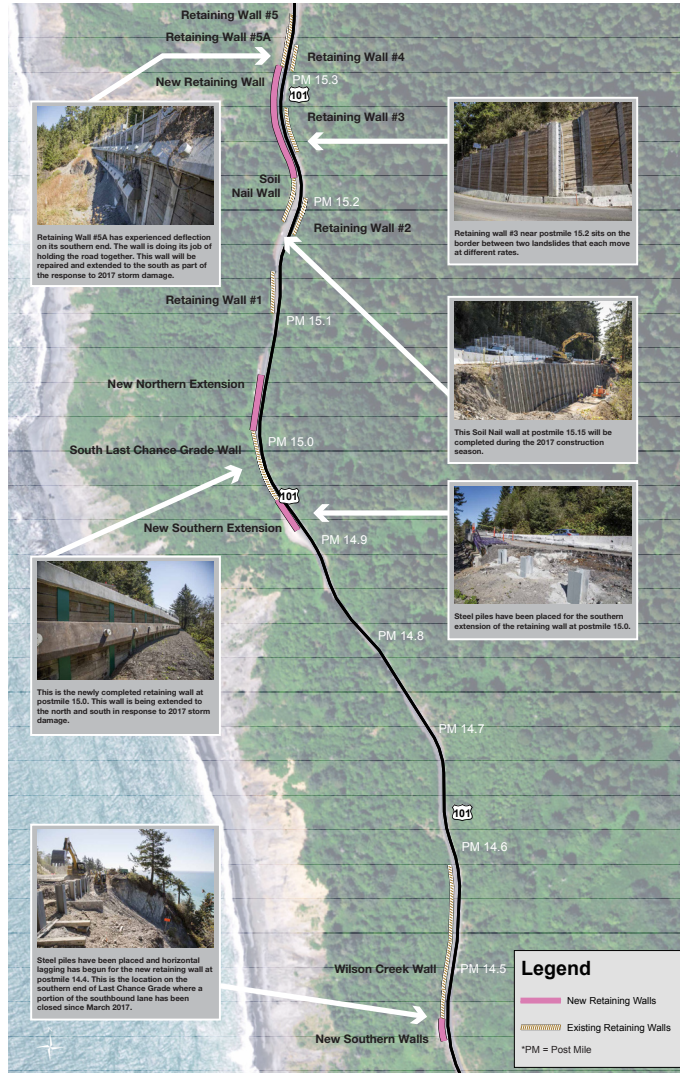
Alternatives:  
A1, A2, C3, C4, C5, F

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## STORM DAMAGE AND REPAIRS

Caltrans continues to maintain and repair the highway at Last Chance Grade. Heavy rains from March 2016 and the winter of 2016/2017 resulted in storm damage including cracks and settlement of the roadway, deformation of retaining walls, and temporary loss of the roadway at a localized landslide at postmile 14.4. In April 2017, the Federal Highway Administration approved funding of \$27.6M in construction dollars to repair this recent storm damage. The scope of this work includes repairs to four retaining walls and construction of four new retaining walls. Construction crews will continue paving and grinding to smooth out the ride.



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# LAST CHANCE GRADE



Public Open House  
10/18/17



## Last Chance Grade Panel Members



**JARED HUFFMAN**  
US CONGRESSMAN  
Serving California's 2nd District



# Agenda

- Presentation
- Question and Answer Period with Panel
- Open House and Additional Q&A

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# Presentation Overview

- Coordination and Partnerships
- Current and Ongoing Improvements to LCG
  - Storm Damage Work
  - Monitoring and Safety Measures
- Long-Term Solution
- Funding

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## Coordination and Partnerships

- Huffman Stakeholder Group
- LCG Partner Group
- Biological Working Group
- Cultural Resources Working Group
- Elected Officials (Fed, State, and Local)
  - McGuire, Wood, Huffman, DeFazio, DN BOS, Crescent City Council, and Others

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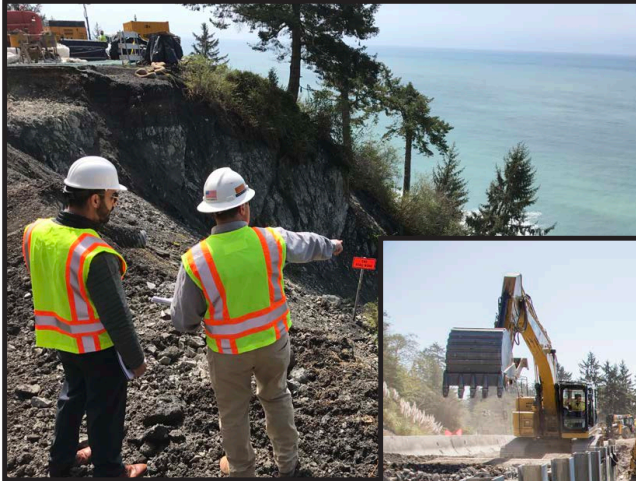
## Current and Ongoing Improvements

- 2016 and 2017 Storm Damage
- \$35M Total Approved for Repairs
  - \$27M in Construction Costs
- Work in Construction

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## Current Construction



**Wilson Creek Wall**  
New Retaining Wall  
Southern End of Last  
Chance Grade



## Current Construction



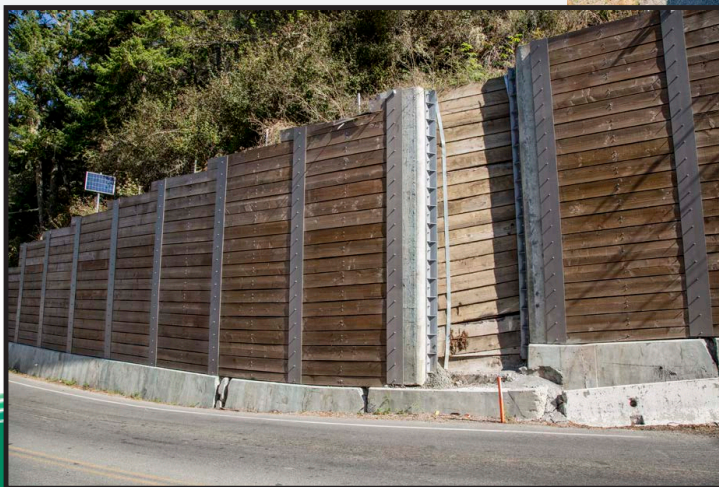
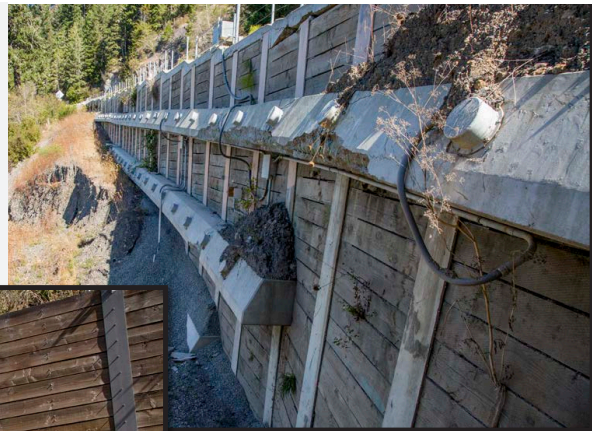
**South Last Chance  
Grade Wall Extension**  
New Retaining Wall Extensions  
to the North and South

## Current Construction



## Future Construction

- Repair of Wall 3 (below)
- Extension of Wall 5A (right) at the Northern End of LCG



# Monitoring and Safety Measures

- Monitoring
  - Boots on the Ground
  - Near Real Time Monitoring System
  - Aerial Photography
  - Ground Surveys
- Safety
  - Public Information
  - Barriers and Rail
  - Paving and Grinding

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# Vertical Movement Since 2012

- Wilson Creek Slide: **3 inches**
- Southern Last Chance Grade Slide: **1 foot**
- Northern Last Chance Grade Slide: **9 feet**

\*Average Movement Per Year: **2 inches**

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# Funding and Project Development

- 2015: Huffman Group Formed
- 2015: Feasibility Study & Economic Analysis
  - Economic Analysis Now Expanded
- 2016: Project Study Report
  - 6 Build Alternatives
    - Major Environmental Issues
- 2017: \$5M for Preliminary Geotechnical Studies

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# Preliminary Geotech Studies

- Needed to Validate and Refine 6 Build Alternatives
- \$5M Funded in May 2017
- Status
  - Permits for Surveys in Hand
  - Surveys and Field Reconnaissance to Begin
- Accessible Areas Complete in Fall 2018.

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# Expert Based Risk Assessment

- A Tool that Informs and Supports Funding Decisions
- Evaluates the Geotechnical Risks to Long Term Performance (Life-Cycle Cost, Mobility, Safety)
- Independent Panel of Geotechnical Experts
- Completion Expected in February 2018

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# Pursuit of Full Funding

- Federal and State Funding Options
- Federal
  - Emergency Relief Program
  - Grant Programs
- State
  - Partial Funding of Environmental Work

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# Funding - Next Steps

- Complete Risk Assessment in Feb 2018.
- Develop a Proposal to Fund the Next Piece of the Environmental Process in July 2018.
  - Update to Project Schedule at that Time.
- Project Potentially Funded in Phases
  - Environmental
  - Design
  - Construction

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### Website

[lastchancegrade.com](http://lastchancegrade.com)

### Contact:

Jaime Matteoli, Project Manager

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