



Project Update - August 2026

Last Chance Grade Permanent Restoration Project: A Long-Term Solution for North Coast Communities

The Last Chance Grade (LCG) Permanent Restoration project is a major investment in the safety, reliability, and quality of life for everyone who travels along U.S. Highway 101 from southern regions of California to Oregon and beyond, especially between Crescent City and Eureka. For decades, the stretch of highway within the project limits has been challenged by active landslides, steep coastal terrain, and increasing storm impacts. Caltrans is committed to delivering a long-term solution that protects this vital lifeline for our communities, local economy, and Tribes, while balancing the protection of the natural and cultural resources that make this region unique. Our commitment includes a landscape scale, long-term investment for the restoration and preservation of late-successional forest habitat, including old growth redwoods and their ecosystems.

Why This Project Matters

U.S. Highway 101 is the only major north–south route along the North Coast. A long-term closure would mean an approximate 8-hour, 449-mile detour, isolating communities and affecting access to school and medical care, goods movement, emergency response, and daily life.

A reliable highway is essential to:

- Keep communities safely connected
- Support local businesses, regional jobs, and goods movement
- Ensure timely emergency response and school services
- Reduce costly maintenance and ongoing emergency repairs

U.S. Highway 101 connects California to Oregon and provides access to the amazing array of California’s North Coast natural resources including Redwood National and State Parks, beaches, fishing, and camping, all of which draws approximately 2.5 million tourists each year to the North Coast region.

The Solution

After years of technical study and collaboration with many stakeholders, Alternative F, the tunnel bypass, has been approved as the selected alternative. The tunnel design avoids the most unstable landslide areas and places approximately 6,000 feet of the highway

underground, protecting travelers from landslide-related closures and reducing long term maintenance needs. While this alternative, with preliminary design, results in the irreplaceable loss of 2.24 acres of late-successional forest habitat and the loss of 16 large (greater than four feet in diameter) redwood trees, there may remain opportunities through the final design process to potentially further reduce impacts to both old growth trees and coastal habitat.

Benefits for People, Nature, and the Economy

The project brings a wide range of benefits:

- Safer, more reliable travel for all road users
- Local and regional economic benefits associated with avoided closures, improved travel times, reduced vehicle operating costs, and fewer crashes
- The tunnel in particular is expected to reduce traffic noise to Redwood National and State Parks

Caltrans is committed to invest millions of dollars towards forest restoration through Redwoods Rising, a landscape-scale restoration program designed to protect and steward previously logged redwood forests so that they can become the old-growth forests of the future. Most importantly, the mitigation also includes a multi-million-dollar endowment to be established with a substantial annual return for the in-perpetuity treatment, management, and maintenance of public lands within Redwood National and State Parks. This ensures that the mitigation invests most effectively in California's resources that belong to the public. Some of the key benefits, in addition to the development of old growth forest habitat, include:

- Restoration and management methods, including snag creation, crown manipulation, understory plant restoration, invasive species control, and other actions aimed at improving habitat quality for special status species, including marbled murrelet, as well as other species endemic to coastal redwood rainforest
- Riparian and in-stream restoration, and road removal that improves habitats and water quality for special status salmonids and other aquatic species
- Funding research with the goal of improving and expanding forest restoration methods

In addition to a substantial investment in Redwoods Rising, Caltrans is also committed to pursuing the protection of additional coastally influenced forest habitat in Humboldt and/or Del Norte County, including redwoods, to be protected in-perpetuity. This measure was developed because of the feedback the project development team received from the Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC) and Save the Redwoods League. Their

long-term engagement on this project has been a valuable outcome of the robust public engagement strategy the project development team has implemented for over a decade.

In addition to the major mitigation investments identified above, the following are some of the additional measures that are part of this unique project:

- Funding Tribal programs that support cultural values and traditional ecological knowledge
- Commitment to pursue Tribal and local workforce development opportunities
- Burying overhead utilities at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park to reduce marbled murrelet mortality

These measures, developed as part of the Last Chance Grade Permanent Restoration Project, represent some of the most robust and innovative strategies ever applied in the state.

Strong Partnerships and Collaboration

This project has been shaped by more than a decade of collaboration with many stakeholders, including, but not limited to:

- Redwood National and State Parks
- Tribal governments
- Save the Redwoods League
- Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)
- Elected Officials
- Business Leaders
- Resource Agencies
- Local Residents and Community Leaders

Working groups, including the Congressman Huffman Working Group, have helped ensure the project minimizes impacts, honors cultural resources, supports Tribal values, and aligns with ecological goals.

Looking Ahead

The goal is simple and shared: protect the people, places, and resources of California's North Coast while ensuring a safe and reliable U.S. Highway 101 for generations to come. While there are a framework and commitment for mitigation as outlined in the environmental document (located on this website), Caltrans looks forward to working with our many stakeholders on the details as the project advances.