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Westport Municipal Advisory Council

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May 4, 2024

Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
Attn: Fourth District Supervisor Dan Gjerde
501 Low Gap Road, Room 1070
Ukiah, California 95482

Re: Abandonment of Cahto Road, a County "Public Highway"

Dear Mendocino County Board of Supervisors,

We recently learned during public comment at our April 4, 2024 meeting that you abandoned Cahto Road without any outreach to our community. We then took input on this matter at our May 2, 2024 meeting. The WMAC has repeatedly communicated to you and County staff the importance of retaining that public right of way over many years for reasons we reiterate here.

Cahto Road was adopted as a "public highway" by Mendocino County February 18, 1878 to connect Westport and Branscomb. It remains a critical route for emergency ingress and egress from Westport in the event that other better maintained routes of escape are blocked or destroyed by tsunamis, landslides, or temblors. Cahto Road will be the only route into and out of our community in a major tsunami because Branscomb Road and State Route 1 pass through the flood zone subject to debris blockage and washouts. It may also be the only viable escape route after a major temblor or due to landslides caused by rainfall, sea level rise, or tsunami events. A major slide on Route 1 just south of Westport is so infamous and constantly under repair Caltrans calls it "The Westport Slide."

Given the high risk that our community may be isolated by such catastrophic events, the WMAC respectfully requests that you reinstate Cahto Road as a public thoroughfare if it was indeed legally abandoned. Cahto Road should be factored into emergency planning for our community. In that regard we urge you to consider input from Caltrans, the state Office of Emergency Management, and the Westport Volunteer Fire Department on how abandonment of that public road may impact public safety.

The WMAC is not advocating maintenance of Cahto Road, but we do ask the County to enforce removal of barriers along that public right-of-way at the expense of the private landowners who illegally installed them. Please contact me at (707) 964-7272 or by emailing info@wmac95488.org if I can clarify the concerns expressed by our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thad M. Van Bueren".

Thad Van Bueren, Chairman

Cc: Matthew K. Brady, Director, Caltrans District 1
Brian Ferguson, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Services
Dan Maxey, Chief, Westport Volunteer Fire Department