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DATE: April 7, 2026

TO: Rio Dell City Council

FROM: Travis Sanborn, Finance Director

THROUGH: Kyle Knopp, City Manager

SUBJECT: Monument Road Slip Out Repair History and Status - Final Invoice Receipt and Direction to Issue Payment (ARPA Fund)

RECOMMENDATION

Receive and file this report and direct the City Manager to issue final payment of \$178,349.26 to the Humboldt County Department of Public Works for the City's cost-share of the Monument Road slip out repair, funded from the City's ARPA funds. This project, the associated MOU with the County, and the ARPA funding source were all previously authorized by the City Council. This action formally closes out the commitment.

BACKGROUND/ DISCUSSION

Monument Road is a vital east-west roadway serving residents of the City of Rio Dell and the unincorporated County of Humboldt, including ranchers, vineyards, timber operators, farms, residences, a rock quarry, and important telecommunications and federal NOAA facilities. The road is also critical for emergency response, evacuation, and firefighting capabilities in the area. The history of this project spans nearly a decade and reflects the complexity of coordinating a federally assisted repair across two jurisdictions while navigating an unusually difficult regulatory and engineering environment.

2017 - Slip Out Originates from Winter Storms

During the winter storm events of February 2017, a slip out developed on Monument Road along the boundary of the City of Rio Dell and the unincorporated County of Humboldt. The storm events were declared both federal and state disasters. The damage was estimated to span approximately 260 feet in total, with roughly half within the City limits.

As early as February 2017, City staff noted movement of the roadway and applied crack sealant to prevent further water infiltration, though additional movement was observed. On April 6, 2017, City and County staff met with FEMA representatives at Rio Dell City Hall for a kickoff meeting, at which it was advised that one agency take the lead on the project. Initial repair cost estimates were approximately \$1,000,000.

In April 2017, the City Council considered whether the City or the County should serve as lead agency. The City's contracted engineering firm, GHD Inc., was engaged to develop a proposed repair solution to be presented to CalOES and FEMA. By June 2017, staff opted to transfer project lead responsibility to the County of Humboldt, which was better positioned to manage the project and had the slip out on its own disaster list.

2018-2019 - Survey, Assessment, and Federal Award

In August 2018, staff reported that federal funds had been awarded and that the County tentatively planned to construct the repair in spring 2019, with a possible delay to 2020. By January 2019, the County was conducting a topographical survey and scheduling a geotechnical assessment, with construction projected as early as 2020. In August 2019, an encroachment permit was processed for a geotechnical evaluation at the Monument Road slip out site.

2020 - MOU Negotiations and Cost Estimates

In February 2020, City Manager Kyle Knopp met with County staff to discuss the project in detail. Under the FEMA cost-sharing formula, both agencies would be responsible for a 6.25% local share. Total repair costs were estimated at approximately \$3,000,000 at that time, placing Rio Dell's 50% share of the local cost at roughly \$93,750, with construction projected for summer 2021. By September 2020, an Engineer's Probable Opinion of Cost estimated the total repair at \$2,032,143, with a local share of \$132,089. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was drafted to split the local cost equally between the City and County, placing Rio Dell's share at \$66,045. The City Council was asked to authorize the City Manager to execute the MOU in September and again in October 2020 as the agreement was refined. Construction remained scheduled for summer 2021.

2021-2022 - FEMA Appeals and Congressional Intervention

Progress stalled significantly due to FEMA's resistance to the engineered repair design. In March 2021, the County requested a Scope of Work change from FEMA, seeking approval for a "soldier pile wall" solution rather than a "mechanically stabilized embankment," based on engineering recommendations suited to the area's uniquely unstable geology. On August 10, 2021, FEMA denied this request. County Engineer Tony Seghetti, PE, submitted an appeal on September 10, 2021, supported by CalOES Deputy Director of Recovery Ryan Buras.

With no FEMA response forthcoming and the condition of the roadway continuing to deteriorate, the City Council authorized the Mayor in February 2022 to sign letters to FEMA Region IX Administrator Robert J. Fenton, Jr. and Congressman Jared Huffman requesting assistance to bring the matter to a timely resolution. The City underscored in those communications that further inaction risked total failure of the roadway, which would sever a significant number of City residents from Rio Dell and create a two-hour detour in place of a two-minute trip.

2022 - Final FEMA Allocation and Revised Cost Exposure

On November 9, 2022, the County received correspondence from CalOES indicating that upon final appeal, FEMA had allocated \$2,359,983 for the Monument Road repair. This figure was well below the original request of \$3,111,717 for the soldier pile wall solution. With no other viable repair option available, the cost-sharing scenario was recalculated and presented to Council as follows:

FEMA underfunding gap	\$751,734
Local share of approved FEMA amount (6.25%)	\$147,498
Total possible local responsibility	\$899,232
Total possible Rio Dell share (50%)	~\$449,616

Staff recommended proceeding with the project and affirming the City's commitment to the 50/50 cost split with the County, noting that the City had adequate reserves to cover the potential exposure. The County intended to bid the project in the first quarter of 2023 for possible completion by the end of that year.

As the final invoice now confirms, the City's actual share came in at \$178,349.26 - well below the worst-case estimate of approximately \$449,616 presented to Council in 2022. This favorable outcome reflects

the federal and state reimbursements that materialized through the project, substantially reducing the burden on local agencies relative to the risk scenario previously disclosed.

2024 - Construction Commences

After years of delays, contractor Mercer Fraser began construction on the Monument Road slip out repair on September 3, 2024. The project remained a federal-aid project throughout, with the local cost share governed by the executed MOU between the City and the County.

2025 - Repair Concluded

By June 2025, the repair was complete and the finished project was well received by both agencies. City Manager Knopp communicated to County Engineer Seghetti that the City was prepared to settle its share promptly, as ARPA funds had been held in reserve for this specific obligation and the City needed to determine its remaining ARPA balance available for other priority projects before the December 31, 2026 expenditure deadline. County staff indicated the invoice would follow final Board of Supervisors approval of the project, with delivery anticipated around September 2025. Staff also monitored potential impacts from federal funding freezes during this period, which did not ultimately affect project completion or reimbursement.

Final Invoice

The invoice was received in late March 2026, somewhat later than the September 2025 estimate, reflecting the County's internal Board approval process. On March 26, 2026, the Humboldt County Department of Public Works issued Bill No. 13121 to the City of Rio Dell for its cost-share of the Monument Road FEMA Project (County Project No. 217356). The invoice reflects the following:

Total Project Charges	\$2,481,531.77
Federal Reimbursement	\$1,769,987.25
State Reimbursement	\$354,846.00
Total Reimbursement	\$2,124,833.25
Local Share	\$356,698.52
Rio Dell Share (1/2 per MOU)	\$178,349.26

The City's share of \$178,349.26 is consistent with the MOU and well within the range of cost exposure previously disclosed to the City Council.

Funding Source

Payment will be made from the City's remaining ARPA funds. This use was previously identified by staff as an eligible ARPA expenditure and has been communicated to the County as the intended funding source since June 2025. Settlement of this invoice will allow staff to determine the City's remaining ARPA balance available for other priority projects ahead of the December 31, 2026 federal expenditure deadline.

FISCAL IMPACT

Payment of \$178,349.26 will be drawn from the City's ARPA fund balance. This expenditure is consistent with prior City Council direction and has been anticipated in the City's capital project planning. The final cost to the City is substantially lower than the worst-case estimate of approximately \$449,616 presented to Council in 2022. No General Fund or Water/Sewer fund impact is anticipated.

ATTACHMENTS

Humboldt County Department of Public Works Invoice No. 13121, dated March 26, 2026