

Mountain Echo

THE NEWSLETTER OF SEMPERVIRENS FUND

Our Essential Redwoods

Our majestic and interconnected redwoods thrive at Castle Rock State Park.

Photo courtesy of David Royal

Since 1900, we have worked together as one community to protect and preserve redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Your support is vital to sustaining, replenishing, and healing *Sequoia sempervirens* habitat and for safeguarding the ecosystems we help thrive along California's coast.

In our current global health crisis, you inspire us to once again persevere, as we did during the pandemic of 1918, the Great Depression, and two world wars. Your support for our organization comes at a time when we, undeterred from our mission, are innovating to conserve and steward the forests in new ways.

In cooperation with state and local agencies and partners, we are returning (after sheltering in place) to actively manage and steward thousands of precious acres of land.

You are making it possible for us to work on reforestation, removing invasive species and debris, and restoring streams.

We have always relied on rigorous scientific research, modeling, and best practices to guide us

with this work, and our Science Advisory Panel and other experts are helping us refine our approaches in a time of social distancing.

Just as science guides us, our common humanity sustains us. We are in awe of the tireless work of the doctors, nurses, and pharmacists; the emergency responders; the grocery, restaurant, and delivery workers; and our local farmers and agricultural workers, who keep our communities as healthy, fed, and cared for as possible.

Redwoods' strength comes, in part, from their interconnected roots. Each tree is bolstered by the others in the grove, and together they are better able to withstand wind, rain, drought, and fire. Our essential workers are our redwoods, standing tall, keeping us deeply connected and nourished, and sheltering us in the storm.

We are all in this together, and for Sempervirens Fund, our hope lies with our magnificent redwoods and with all of you who come together for the trees, for each other, and for a better, healthier future for all. 🌲



Meagan Demitz in awe of the massive redwood trees.

Photos courtesy of Meagan Demitz

Discovery Fills Your Heart With Wonder

For Board Member Meagan Demitz, redwoods are magic

For Meagan Demitz, redwoods are magic. She is a California native and spent many years as a kid visiting the Santa Cruz Mountains, but what really stirs her soul is seeing other people experience special natural places for the first time.

Her parents were new to California when they met. Her dad was from the Midwest. Her mom grew up in New York City. Neither had a lot of connection with nature until they moved to California as adults. They never dreamed land could look like this. The coast—the forests, hills, mountains, and ocean—is such a treasure, and something not to be taken for granted.

“Not long ago I was at the beach watching a man taking pictures. He came over to pet my dog and told me this was his first time seeing the Pacific Ocean. He was so excited, and it made my heart explode.”

Demitz, an organizational development and fund-raising consultant, serves on The Sempervirens Board, and chairs the board’s development committee.

“I’ve worked for a lot of organizations, and it is a relief and delight to work with a staff and board that are so professional and passionate, and planning for the future. We also consider ourselves as part of an ecosystem of organizations and partners. We are a part of a group of groups doing important work.”

Demitz also supports Sempervirens Fund as a monthly sustaining donor.

“Every dollar counts. Monthly giving really helps keep the organization sound and secure. And as a nonprofit professional, I really appreciate how well the donated dollars are used by Sempervirens.”

Asked for her favorite place to get out in nature, Demitz responds that she's an equal opportunist. "If it's in the trees, I'm there."

Demitz also encourages us all to take time to read the signs at parks and learn about who is making these places possible, from non-profits like Sempervirens Fund that bought and cared for the land, to the agencies that operate public parks.

"I like people to develop a curiosity about who protects the land we enjoy. It takes a lot of infrastructure and support to make these experiences happen." Parks and open space don't just happen." 🌲



Photo courtesy of Diane Bigler

A bobcat on the move near Big Basin Redwoods State Park

Join Meagan and become a monthly donor today:
sempervirens.org/givemonthly



Photo courtesy of Ian Bornarth

Cotoni-Coast Dairies Thanks You

Earlier this year, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) opened an important public comment period that will shape the future of Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument. Thank you to all in our community who spoke up for Santa Cruz County's newest national monument and its natural and cultural treasures.

The landscape can become a much-beloved recreational treasure if managed properly. BLM had proposed several activities that our community believed would be harmful to the monument's future

and to the safety of neighboring communities. We asked you to raise your voice and share your concerns, and we are grateful you took the time to do so.

Together, we asked BLM to ensure the monument would be managed to be a safe haven for fish and wildlife, to restore rare and important native vegetation, to enhance water quality, and to honor Native Americans who occupied this landscape for millennia. To realize this vision, BLM will need to engage in a careful balancing act. 🌲

To keep up to date with news on their decisions, be sure to sign up for our emails at sempervirens.org/news.



Return to Nature

The Santa Cruz Mountains Are Calling

Have John Muir's famous words, "The mountains are calling and I must go," ever felt truer? Many parks closed due to COVID-19 precautions, but you can now return to nature! And because of you and your fellow supporters, there are many amazing places from the peaks to the sea awaiting you.

While we've been at home, the forests you've protected have continued to thrive and provide a home for wildlife too. These ancient redwoods have lived through many unprecedented times before. Thanks to you, these forests will still be a source of soothing and inspiration for generations to come. While you're reuniting with the trails, please continue to keep yourself and others safe with these tips from California State Parks:

- **Keep It Moving:** Keep walking, jogging, surfing, swimming, etc. No sitting. No sunbathing.
- **Leave It at Home:** No coolers, umbrellas, shade tents, BBQs, or chairs.
- **Stay Safer at 6 Feet:** Maintain a physical distance of 6 feet or more. No gatherings, picnics, or beach parties.
- **Keep Clean:** Be prepared. Bring soap/sanitizer and pack out all trash.

Check the park's website for the latest information on trail status—including any one-way use requirements for social distancing—facilities like restrooms, fountains, and parking availability before you go. Although mask requirements at parks may vary, you're encouraged to bring a mask and wear it when near others outside of your household, like when passing others or when keeping a 6-foot distance isn't possible. Exercise like hiking, running, and biking can cause heavier breathing, making a 6-foot distance less effective. If you're sick, please stay home and take care!

Ready to explore? You can find suggestions for traditional hikes and virtual visits on the back.

The mountains are calling!

The Redwood Grove Loop Trail

Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park

Easy, 0.8 mile, 1 hour

See the grove that launched a movement! A visit to this ancient redwood grove by photographer Andrew P. Hill, more than a century ago, helped launch the Sempervirens Club (yours truly) and the redwood preservation movement. Amid the hush of old-growth redwood trees, the sounds of trains can occasionally be heard from the nearby Roaring Camp Railroad. To enjoy this delightful mix of history, head to the Visitor Center, or to the park's website, to pick up a trail map filled with facts for markers along the trail. The shady, accessible Redwood Grove Loop Trail begins next to the Visitor Center. Keep an eye out for bright yellow banana slugs, which can often be spotted here. At the halfway point of the loop, you can step inside the historic Fremont Tree's large hollowed-out base and marvel at the resilience of this living redwood. Look for a gate near the south end of the loop trail, to take a short detour to the San Lorenzo River. Follow the gated dirt road a few yards for a lovely view of a railroad bridge over the river. Once you're back on the Redwood Grove Loop, the trail will lead you back among the towering trees.

Tafoni Trail to El Corte de Madera Creek Trail

El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserve

Moderate, 3.5 miles, 2 hours

It may surprise visitors to this lush preserve that it was clear-cut in the late 1800s. If you look closely, you may see lingering signs of logging—reminders of why your work to restore the forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains is so crucial. In 2013, you added 31 acres to this preserve, including a large old-growth redwood grove. You can hike in the cool shade of many types of trees, from buckeyes to redwoods. To begin your journey, park in the Skeggs Point lot (check availability before you go), carefully cross Skyline Boulevard, and enter the preserve through gate #CM01. A little way down the path, keep right at the split to stay on Tafoni Trail. Noise from Skyline will quickly fade to the sounds of the forest. A mile down the trail, a small path on your right will lead you to the intricate honeycombs of the Tafoni sandstone formation. Once you've returned to Tafoni Trail, hike between redwoods, tanoaks, madrones, and huckleberries for 0.8 miles until you reach the trail junction. Head right onto El Corte de Madera Creek Trail. Listen for the creek and look for starflower and wild rose. After 1.4 miles, you'll meet up with Tafoni Trail again. Turn left onto Tafoni Trail to return.



banana slugs

Photo courtesy of Mike Kahn



wild rose

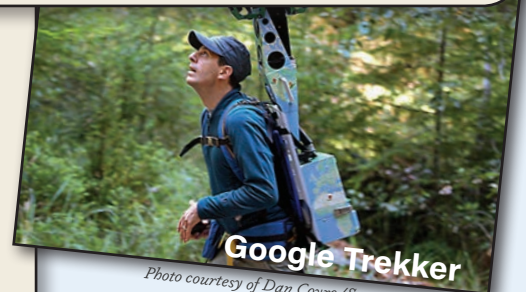
Photo courtesy of Rebecca Thomas

Saratoga Gap Trail

Castle Rock State Park

VIRTUAL HIKES!

If you aren't able to go to the parks, let the parks come to you! A virtual visit with Google Maps is the next best thing to hitting the trail the traditional way. While 360-degree views of many points of interest can be seen on Google Maps, you can enjoy nearly the entire Saratoga Gap Trail in Castle Rock State Park, which was preserved by you and your fellow supporters. To explore the trail's beautiful views and plant communities from the comfort of your home—or anywhere you have an internet connection—type in sempervirens.org/virtual-hikes. Scroll down to explore the San Lorenzo Valley Vista from the Saratoga Gap Trail. Once you see the view from the trail, click and drag your mouse to see the sights around you. To move along the trail, click the white arrow that appears over the trail. For more places and tips to explore virtually, please visit sempervirens.org/virtual-hikes.



Google Trekker

Photo courtesy of Dan Coyro/Santa Cruz Sentinel



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Land Stewardship Associate Beatriz Jiménez clears invasive species along Cotoni-Coast Ridge. Photo courtesy of Russell Ferretti-Hoyle

Returning to the Land

Spring is a time of renewal, and for Sempervirens Fund, it is normally a time when our land stewardship activities really begin to hum. But this year has been different. We retreated from the land during the early weeks of the COVID-19 shelter-in-place restrictions, and we made plans to return.

It is as clear as ever that parks and open spaces are vital to our well-being. Because of your support, many important projects will be able to continue. We are now back on the land, focusing on rewilding our protected lands and building resilience to threats like climate change and wildfire. You are making this work possible:

- Healing habitats. We are removing clematis in the San Vicente Redwoods and caring for the native garden at the Robert C. Kirkwood Entrance to Castle Rock State Park.
- Building wildfire resilience. We are managing shaded fuel breaks on several properties and installing water tanks for fire protection near Gazos Creek.
- Informing habitat management. On multiple properties, we are monitoring wildlife and conducting bird, botanical, bullfrog, and amphibian surveys throughout the region.
- Improving infrastructure efficiencies. We are installing a solar-powered water tank array near San Vicente Redwoods to support fire and road maintenance.

Thank you for helping us return to the land, and for helping nature thrive. 🌲



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