

Mountain Echo

THE NEWSLETTER OF SEMPERVIRENS FUND

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We did it!

Sempervirens Fund spearheads successful campaign for Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument

Just eight days before the end of his presidency President Barack Obama added the Cotoni-Coast Dairies property — on the north coast of Santa Cruz County — to the California Coastal National Monument. In signing the monument proclamation, Obama endowed the landscape with special conservation status and brought Presidential recognition to its incredible ecological, cultural and historic values. Without this monument designation, the landscape might never be opened for the public to enjoy or restored to its full ecological richness. Thank you President Obama for leaving a natural legacy that will benefit us and future generations!

[continued on page 3]



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our cover story celebrates the addition of the Cotoni-Coast Dairies property to the California Coastal National Monument. This conclusion to a multi-year campaign, spearheaded by Sempervirens Fund but championed by many political leaders, partners and supporters like you, is indeed reason to celebrate. As with so much of Sempervirens Fund's work, it began with a bold and innovative vision that garnered strong public support, followed by years of tenacious commitment to guarantee the dream became a reality. We add this to our proud legacy of remarkable protected areas — like Big Basin, Castle Rock, Butano and Portola Redwoods State Parks — that would not exist but for Sempervirens Fund's efforts.



President Obama's decision to confer special conservation status on Cotoni-Coast Dairies is just the beginning of a long-term love affair we will have with this landscape. We will remain involved for as long as it takes to ensure it is well stewarded and opened for public enjoyment. In places like Big Basin, our commitment has lasted over 100 years!

The subsequent election has brought tremendous uncertainty to the conservation realm. Climate change deniers occupy some of the highest positions in the land. The Antiquities Act (which provides the authority to establish national monuments) is under assault. Bedrock environmental laws protecting our air, water, and wildlife appear vulnerable. This new political reality threatens the future of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Thanks to supporters like you, Sempervirens Fund will continue to acquire important conservation lands, provide refuge to imperiled species, and advance essential ecological restoration, despite the turmoil in Washington, D.C. Now more than ever, our steady hand and deep expertise will play an essential role in safeguarding our mountain treasures. Now more than ever, the healthy redwood forests we conserve are needed to store carbon and combat the existential threat of climate change. We are grateful we can count on you to stand by our side during this pivotal moment.

Sincerely,

Sara Barth, Executive Director



Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument

The Cotoni-Coast Dairies property includes approximately 700 acres of redwood forests that connect with the 8,532-acre San Vicente Redwoods property, protected by Sempervirens Fund and POST in 2011.

Sempervirens Fund, under the direction of former California Assembly-member and past Board President Fred Keeley and current Board President Jacqueline Wender, led the monument campaign from its inception with generous support and the active involvement of our board, donors, foundation funders, and key partners. Without the vision, tenacity and tireless leadership provided by Congresswoman Anna Eshoo and former Senator Barbara Boxer, this landscape would not have been protected. We are deeply indebted to them for championing this effort. We are grateful to former Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt, California Resources Secretary John Laird, Assemblyman Mark Stone, Santa Cruz Supervisor Ryan Coonerty and Valentin Lopez, Chairman of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band for providing essential support to this campaign. Dozens of partner organizations, including Peninsula Open Space Trust, Save the Redwoods League, the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, and The Nature Conservancy, hundreds of local businesses, and over 15,000 members of the public also endorsed and supported this designation. It was a remarkable team effort.

“This is the ‘stuff’ of a dream come true. After years of hard work by so many, this majestic property will be protected in perpetuity,” Congresswoman Anna Eshoo said. “I salute our region’s environmental leaders and conservationists, the dedicated work of thousands of local citizens, local elected officials, conservation advocates, and tribal leaders who have worked so hard to secure this designation. And I thank President Obama for his extraordinary leadership of environmental conservation. This proclamation ensures that this jewel will forever remain a part of California’s coastal crown, allowing future generations to learn from its history and enjoy its beauty.”

The Cotoni-Coast Dairies monument addition spans 5,800 acres of scenic federal land in California’s Coast Range that represents a globally-recognized biodiversity hotspot that is exceptional even within the context of the adjacent, ecologically rich Santa Cruz Mountains. Its Mediterranean climate and unique topography — marine terraces etched by multiple watersheds — foster numerous ecosystems within a relatively small area. Cotoni-Coast Dairies is home to 14 native vegetation



In September 2016 more than 300 people travelled to a public meeting in Cambria to show their support for the Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument campaign.

communities, including redwoods, two types of native grasslands and many rare plant species. It serves as a refuge for many imperiled plant and animal species, including the iconic mountain lion, gray fox, California red-legged frog and peregrine falcon. It connects to 15,000 acres of adjoining protected lands, forming an impressive 23,000-acre area of wildlands only an hour's drive from the Bay Area's seven million people.

In addition to redwoods and watersheds, the property is home to four registered ancestral Native American archaeological sites, and many more still may be identified through formal archaeological surveys. The Cotoni (pronounced "Cha-toni") were the Native Americans who inhabited the area before European contact. They were part of the greater Awaswas nation whose descendants are members of today's Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument is the first national monument to be named in honor of the indigenous people of California.

"This is historic for Cotoni and Amah Mutsun descendants," said Chairman Lopez. "Our Cotoni ancestors lived here for thousands of years as they raised their families and stewarded the lands that provided for all living things. The National Monument designation protects and conserves the beauty and spirituality of this land for all future generations. We are grateful to those who supported this effort."

The campaign to protect Cotoni-Coast Dairies started as a stand-alone effort but eventually



The Cotoni-Coast Dairies property includes six watersheds that drain to the Pacific Ocean.

created enough momentum to support monument designation for five other coastal areas (Piedras Blancas, Lost Coast Headlands, Trinidad Head, Orange County Rocks, and Lighthouse Ranch) that will serve as "gateways" to the existing California Coastal National Monument. Collectively, these additions begin to fulfill the vision of the California Coastal National Monument as a string of coastal pearls that allow people to access and enjoy remarkable coastal treasures up and down the state. 🌲

Frequently asked questions:

May I visit the new national monument?

The Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument is not open at the present time. The Bureau of Land Management, the federal agency that manages the land, will embark on a multi-year process with public input to create a management plan for the property. In other words, it may not be open for a while.

Where can I find more information?

More information about the Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument can be found at: sempervirens.org/ccdnm

ACQUISITION PROJECT

Stepping Forward to Protect the Redwoods

Protecting redwood forests is not easy. Purchasing forestlands or an easement that limits activities on forests in private ownership can take many years and many steps along the way. The following are eight steps we take to protect the redwoods:

1. The landowner chooses to work with us. Sometimes a project begins with a call from a landowner expressing interest in selling land; sometimes we call landowners.

Photo © Ian Bomarth



Sempervirens Fund has permanently protected more than 53 square miles of redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Shaping the Future

For generations Sempervirens Fund has successfully completed redwood conservation projects because of people like you: individuals who in one way or another are connected to the redwoods and who care enough to help us protect them. To ensure that this work continues, we are investing in today's youth to help them build a connection with these mighty forests.

We offer hands-on internship opportunities to help young adults gain foundational experience in the field and shape their plans for a future career. Each quarter, we invite two students from the UC Santa Cruz Environmental Studies Program to take part in stewardship work at the San Vicente Redwoods. Their work includes designing and implementing on-the-ground plans to remove invasive species and complete other aspects of habitat restoration.

For instance, the interns will play an important role in a multi-year, multi-faceted restoration project (thanks to a \$1.14 million grant from the California

2. We consult our database of 26,000 parcels to assess the property's conservation values and follow-up with a site visit to ground-truth our data.
3. We negotiate a purchase price with the landowner based on an independent appraisal.
4. Our Board reviews the project and decides whether or not to move forward.
5. We fundraise, relying primarily on the generosity of our individual donors.
6. We complete due diligence (biological surveys, inspections for hazardous materials, etc.) to ensure we know what we are getting.
7. We complete the purchase and celebrate!
8. We steward the forest now in our care. We begin restoring the property's natural resources, ensure it is safeguarded from trespass and other threats, and begin planning for its eventual transfer to public ownership.

The steps are many, but the results are well worth the effort. Thanks for being our partners on this important journey! 🌲



Photo © Ian Rowbotham

*UCSC student interns plant native California strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) and thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*) on the San Vicente Redwoods property.*

Department of Fish and Wildlife) to control *Clematis vitalba*, an invasive plant that is impacting trees and habitat in the San Vicente Redwoods. As student intern Anthony Fuentes put it, Sempervirens Fund's program "offers us an invaluable resource — an outdoor classroom and the chance to put theory to the test." Experiences like these can shape a student's life forever, and in turn they can shape the future of the forest. 🌲

FIELD NOTES

San Vicente Redwoods Prescribed Burn

As the glowing orange flames snaked through the understory beneath the twisted branches of live oak and madrone trees, more than 30 Cal Fire firefighters closely tended the line of the controlled six-acre burn. On this clear October day at the San Vicente Redwoods property, Sempervirens Fund, together with our partners Peninsula Open Space Trust, Cal Fire, and the Amah Mutsun Land Trust, re-introduced fire to the landscape by conducting a prescribed burn. Fire plays a vital role in the ecosystem, enhancing growing conditions for evergreen and oak dominated forests, creating natural vegetation mosaics, and lowering the potential for



Photo © Mike Kahn

future wildfires. This burn was special in that it provided an opportunity for members of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band to restore a traditional stewardship practice to the land. Members of the Amah Mutsun Land Trust's Stewardship Corps are studying the native plant regeneration in response to the fire. 🌲

Planted Trees: Bringing New Life to the Forest

Photo © Ian Rowbotham



Each year, donations to this program provide a wonderful way to honor loved ones with a living connection to the landscape, and the collective impact on the restoration of our local redwood forest is significant. Each year, donations to this program provide essential support for tree planting projects throughout the Santa Cruz Mountains. For instance, we recently contributed \$5,600 of Planted Tree program donations to the Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park Riparian Forest Enhancement Project. Through this project, we are helping restore rare habitat in an area of the Park that was taken over by non-native velvet grass and bull thistle. Donations to this program facilitated the site preparation, planting, and maintenance of 182 trees and allowed State Parks staff to bring new life to this diverse, native forest habitat. 🌲

Setting Our Sights on the Trail

Trail planning is underway at San Vicente Redwoods! With our partners at Peninsula Open Space Trust, Save the Redwoods League, and the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, we are in the process of developing a robust, scientifically reviewed recreational trail plan for the 8,532-acre San Vicente Redwoods. Because we seek to provide a first-class recreational experience while having the least impact on the property's multiple conservation values (sensitive wildlife habitat, rare plant occurrences, riparian zones, etc.), this trail planning takes time. We expect the first set of trails to open in 2019. Trails will be constructed and opened in several phases over many years, and carefully managed and monitored during this time in order to identify, address, and limit negative environmental impacts. Stay tuned! 🌲



Photo © Ian Bomarth



Scott Peden



Billy Prior Bates

IN MEMORIAM

Honoring Two Dedicated Volunteers

Sempervirens Fund's volunteers are part of the bedrock of our organization, giving us strength, balance, and extended reach. During the past year, we lost a few dedicated long-term volunteers, including Scott Peden and Billy Prior.

Scott Peden was an avid historian with a particular talent for recalling even the smallest details of our organization's long history. He also was an ecologist with a keen eye, often sharing his love for the redwood forest through the lens of a camera. Scott helped us to create a Sempervirens Fund historic photo archive chronicling our local redwoods and our organization's history from the early 1900s.

Billy Prior Bates spent over 33 years as a volunteer for Sempervirens Fund serving in many different capacities. Billy's dedication to the redwoods will forever live on in the 255-foot "Statue of Responsibility" tree at Big Basin Redwoods State Park, named as such due to her efforts to remind park visitors of the link between liberty and responsibility.

The next time you are at Big Basin Redwoods, perhaps visit the Statue of Responsibility tree where Billy is recognized or the Tree of Honor Grove where Scott is recognized. Scott and Billy were true redwood champions. We will miss them deeply yet are consoled knowing that their efforts to protect our local redwoods continue to inspire us all.

If you are interested in becoming a Sempervirens Fund volunteer please visit our website at sempervirens.org/volunteer or email us at redwoods@sempervirens.org. 🌲

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

Please join us in welcoming two new members to Sempervirens Fund's Board of Directors

Bob Moles is a self-proclaimed student of real estate for more than 40 years who now serves as Chairman of Cupertino-based Intero Real Estate Services. He likes to hike, bike, and jog, and his favorite place to do all three is amidst the redwoods. "Silicon Valley and the greater San Francisco Bay Area is a special place with vibrant urban centers surrounded by close-to-home, exquisite nature," says Bob. "Working with Sempervirens Fund allows me to join my personal passion for the outdoors with my professional expertise in real estate to protect the landscapes that I love. It's a natural fit."



Bob Moles

Vishy Venugopalan is Vice President at Citi Ventures, the venture capital arm of Citigroup. "I decided to join the Board because I like to hike, particularly at Big Basin and more recently at Henry Cowell Redwoods, and because it is among the redwoods that I have experienced moments of some of the deepest wonder and spirituality I've known," says Vishy. "I want to make sure that these trees are here to similarly inspire future generations. And, professionally, I am here because I value entrepreneurs and Sempervirens Fund, though it has been around for ages, maintains an entrepreneurial approach to conservation. It is exciting and it clearly works."



Vishy Venugopalan



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CRITTER NOTES

Spotted in the Shadows: The Santa Cruz Black Salamander

You know it's a special day when you spot a Santa Cruz Black Salamander (*Aneides flavipunctatus niger*). This elusive black salamander subspecies is native to and found only in the Santa Cruz Mountains. These salamanders are little creatures (measuring three to five inches in length), charcoal gray to jet-black in color, and mostly nocturnal, which explains why they are so rarely seen.

Black salamanders are also considered "lungless," as they do not breathe through lungs but, rather, respire through their skin. Because of this specialized respiration these salamanders do not spend time in the water as many other salamanders do. They lay their eggs on top of moist soil and their young emerge from the eggs fully formed. They then live their lives in rich, damp cool environments under fallen logs and rocks, venturing out for a climb to stretch their long legs and tails while foraging for spiders, beetles, ants, termites and millipedes.

Because of continued human impacts on this salamander's habitat, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has identified the Santa Cruz Black Salamander as a "species of special concern." So the next time you are out on a hike, please tread lightly and look to the shadows. You might see something extra special. 🌲

Photo © J. Maughn



Photo © Neal Sharma (POST)

