

IMPACT REPORT 2020



Sempervirens
Fund



To Our Steadfast Community,

A generation ago, many long-term strategic plans were in development that referenced 2020 and the clarity of vision that would be achieved and realized by that magical year. Instead, 2020 was as unplanned as any year in recent memory.

Throughout a worldwide health crisis, devastating wildfires, and civic and political upheaval, our community—all of you—came together, for redwoods and for each other. We have suffered great loss, and we've experienced steadfast resolve. We've been "Valley" and "Mountain" Strong. We've looked to the redwoods for solace, connection, and community, and for reflection on our own resilience.

When I think about communities getting stronger in the face of adversity, I think about redwoods. A single coast redwood tree can live for thousands of years, bear the scars of numerous fires, be shaped by drought, weather torrential storms, and live on. Redwoods—like us—are strongest when connected, from roots to canopies, in a community of trees, facing the elements together.

Despite the challenges and setbacks, we are stronger as an organization because of you. We made significant headway to protect new lands in the coming years and to prepare protected lands for public access and to be added to regional state parks. And we were virtually joined by thousands of new supporters in times of crisis.

In this year's impact report, we look back at a year shaped by events we never imagined and look ahead to a bright future, possible because of your support and care.

We cannot wait to celebrate with you in the cool shade of a redwood grove again.

With gratitude,

Sara Barth



Dear Redwoods Supporters,

In 2020, I had the honor to begin my tenure as president of the Sempervirens Fund board of directors. Little did I know what was in store for all of us. I can say with confidence, and with pride, that the organization you support met each challenge with purpose, resolve, and action.

As you will read in this report, momentous events shaped our experiences as a land trust this past year. With each moment, the Sempervirens Fund team did what this organization does so very well. They researched the facts, designed a well-informed plan, and responded with alacrity, creativity, and intent. They were determined to keep moving the mission forward, to protect the health of staff, communities, and forests, and to ensure that your commitment to protecting redwoods would be honored.

I've long admired this organization for its longevity, tenacity, and community spirit. And those qualities shone brightest in this dark year, lighting the way to a promising future for our region's redwoods. Time spent in nature proved more valuable than ever during the pandemic, reminding us that we are mentally and physically healthier when we get outdoors.

Wildfires challenged us and were devastating in many ways, but resilient redwoods will recover. And no organization is better positioned to help protect the last old growth redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains and to help today's forests recover and thrive for future generations to celebrate and enjoy.

Thank you for your enduring support.

Sincerely,

Pam Koch

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Standing Tall Together

The global pandemic did not spare our communities in the Santa Cruz Mountains.



Regional parks had more local visitors than ever in 2020.

Despite the strain put on our well-being and our economies, we are poised to make important gains in redwood forest protection efforts, ensure our forests are well cared for, and improve our preparation for future climate-fueled weather events.

This would not be possible without your steadfast commitment to protecting redwoods, which has made our community stronger, more unified, and more determined to see our forests thrive and grow.

Progress for Protected Redwoods

We believe wild and thriving redwood forests can flourish again from Silicon Valley to the Pacific Ocean. With your help in 2020,

negotiations to protect thousands of acres of essential redwood forests in the coming few years began.

These properties are home to stands of old growth and healthy second-generation forests and vital waterways. They will expand protected and connected wildlife corridors. They will reinforce forests already protected by public parks. And they will enrich outdoor experiences for the next generation of redwood and nature supporters.

Stewardship in a Time of Crisis

Undeterred by restrictions and wildfire, we safely continued to implement our management plans of more than 11,000 acres of protected forests throughout the region. Restoration and stewardship efforts at San Vicente Redwoods, and alongside Big Basin, Butano, and Castle Rock state parks, are ensuring forest habitats are healthy, wildlife have the best possible conditions to thrive, and risks are mitigated.

Regional Benefits

Protecting priority redwood forests has expansive benefits for the ecology of the

region. Your support ensures the natural systems flourish and the healthy forest can sustain itself—and us. It is safe for wildlife—like mountain lions, marbled murrelet, and Coho salmon—and crucial refuge and recreation for us all.

Critically, thriving and connected redwoods are climate champions, resilient to fire and capturing and storing more carbon dioxide more efficiently and for a longer time than any other tree species on the planet.

Thank you to our community. You are our redwoods, standing tall and weathering the storm together.

sempervirens.org/redwoods-strong

“We hike often in the redwood forests and are so appreciative of Sempervirens Fund’s commitment to their preservation for generations to enjoy. The calming energy and resilience of redwoods have been the right tonic for these trying times.”

—Mary Scheller and Steve Belmont



Nature for All

In 2020, Indigenous Peoples reconnected their tribes with sacred lands, traditional knowledge, and cultural practices, on land protected by you. Despite pandemic restrictions, stewardship projects with the Muwekma Ohlone and Amah Mutsun Tribal Band cultivated the growing native garden at Castle Rock State Park's Robert C. Kirkwood entrance.



Camping at Little Basin before the fires.

And the devastating wildfires at Big Basin Redwoods State Park have a slim but silver lining: As a new park experience is planned for the future, it is critical that the voices that inform and shape this future truly reflect the rich and diverse cultures and interests of anyone seeking inspiration among the redwoods.

Without passionate people like you, future generations would be less likely to stand in the towering majesty of coast redwoods. And those future generations should feel welcome and safe, and their experiences should better reflect their own cultural and traditional expressions of nature and the great outdoors.

We know that the conservation movement has not always been at the forefront of

equitable and welcome experiences in nature. Sweeping and enduring societal change is necessary to overcome racism and exclusion. It requires action and commitment from all of us.

For Sempervirens Fund, that means ensuring the parks and open spaces that we have worked to create are inclusive, welcoming, and safe for all people. That includes advocating for public policies and expanding the diversity of people who make up our board and staff to truly reflect California's communities and you, our donor community.

Learn more about our work to advance nature for all:

sempervirens.org/nature-for-all

“I love coming to Castle Rock State Park because I like to tend the garden and learn about the plants and join in on volunteer days. We like to do what we can to maintain it and gain knowledge and connect with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe.”

–Lupe Delgado

Our Common Ground

Without you—and your voices for change—policies that would improve conservation of redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains would not be possible. Thanks to you, we have advanced major milestones together. No matter the political turbulence in America, nature is our common ground. In 2020, we witnessed historic milestones.

In 2020, your dedication ensured significant progress was made for public access to Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument. There is a lot to like about the final plans for managing the natural and cultural resources on the land and providing a safe and rewarding experience there for all of us. We are closing in on victory, and we will continue the fight for the best possible plan, balancing conservation values and public enjoyment.

Federal funding for land conservation has been critical for our efforts in the Santa Cruz Mountains. And many of you spoke up for the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in 2020, and after decades of work, we finally claimed victory. Signed into law in 2020, LWCF is now a permanent fixture in conservation policy, ensuring future generations have access to nature and

spurring new investments in our outdoor economy, which in this critical time can mean important job opportunities.

Looking ahead, we are eager to carry your commitment to redwoods forward in state policies that will further shape and improve protection efforts in the Santa Cruz Mountains and to imagine a new future for Big Basin Redwoods State Park that ensures that the forests there thrive, as has always been our vision.

Thank you for your steadfast commitment to protecting redwoods and for letting your voices ring forth.

Learn more about what's at stake:
sempervirens.org/whats-at-stake



A magnificent view from Cotoni Coast Ridge.

“When we walk amongst ancient redwood trees and thriving ecosystems, our nervous systems relax, we feel at home, and we can come together as a human family. Sempervirens Fund’s work is very important to me because it preserves nature while opening it to people in a very accessible way.” –Eva Iglesias



Enduring Redwoods

Wildfire consumed forests—and our communities—throughout the Santa Cruz Mountains in 2020. With your support, damage assessment from the wildfires, preparation for winter storms, and plans for recovery efforts in 2021 were quickly and effectively implemented. You ensured that our forests would be able to recover from catastrophic wildfires. In some ways, this has always been our work. In other ways, our work is just beginning.

Caring for the Land

We care for more than 11,000 acres of land across the Santa Cruz Mountains—from San Vicente Redwoods and Cotoni-Coast Ridge to the Last Chance, Fall Creek, and Jamison Creek properties alongside Big Basin to the Robert C. Kirkwood entrance at Castle Rock State Park.

Our habitats face many risks, including the uncertain and often extreme effects of climate change and wildfire. We balance these risks, and the rewards of healing forest ecosystems, in our stewardship planning and in collaboration with neighbors, partners, and regional networks.

Managing these dangers means preparing the land for specific threats, especially

wildfire. Wildfire mitigation efforts center on the use of fire as a tool to clear out fuel that would spark a conflagration. Called prescribed burns, such fires are a critical tool for wildfire risk management.

Your support for this level of direct wildfire risk management at San Vicente Redwoods in 2020 likely diminished the ferocity of the wildfire as it swept across this special and beautiful property, endangering nearby neighborhoods. A prescribed burn with CAL FIRE and the Amah Mutsun Land Trust, along with well-maintained fire breaks, slowed the rush of fire across meadowlands near Bonny Doon.

And your support for infrastructure improvements, such as newly installed

water tanks, not only supported restoration activities, but also provided resources for fighting fire. Damage from the fires accelerated our efforts to return ponds on Filice Ranch into wetlands, improve the long-term viability of habitat for red-legged frogs, and reduce erosion into the surrounding watershed.

Restoration and stewardship programs across all these important properties ensure we are keeping redwood forests thriving and protecting forests from the worst outcomes of devastating weather events.

Learn more about our work at sempervirens.org/redwoods-recovery

“We are impressed with the thorough and collaborative approach Sempervirens Fund has undertaken to care for redwood forests across the region. They can’t do it all, but without them, wildfires may have been even worse.” –Lisa and Michael Schallop



Big Basin's Future

Big Basin Redwoods State Park has always been, first and foremost, a forest. When Big Basin became the epicenter of the August 2020 CZU Lightning Complex wildfire, you joined park and redwoods lovers worldwide in collective awe and grief. You also supported emergency funding for recovery efforts. More than 1,300 donors worldwide contributed more than \$600,000 to funds for Big Basin and for redwoods restoration throughout the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Your immediate response and support ensured California State Parks could take critical early steps to make staff—and ultimately public—access into the park safe. Funding has already helped park crews remove dangerous trees damaged in the fire, and likely to fall, along the 100 miles of roads and trails.

We believe that in this moment of indelible transformation, Big Basin can lead the way for the California State Park system to enter into a new era of public parks—one that is desperately needed. Reopening, restoring, and rebuilding Big Basin can pioneer a new model for California's state parks, just as Big Basin accomplished more than a century ago. Equally bold and innovative thinking is needed now to usher in a new approach to park management that is responsive to the realities of a new era.

Much has changed since the period when Big Basin became a park and its core infrastructure was built. The climate is warmer and drier, leading to more extreme weather events. A century of fire suppression has created a large buildup of fuel in the forests, leaving them vulnerable to intense and catastrophic fires.

Big Basin can be built to last, planned for fire, co-exist with people, and offer safe and welcoming experiences for everyone. We will engage in this effort in close collaboration with the many partners we have in the nonprofit, for-profit, and governmental sectors. And although the iconic buildings may be gone, the essence of Big Basin will only be lost if we fail to prepare it for the future it and we deserve.

Learn more at
sempervirens.org/big-basin-future




Where Wildfires Affected Protected and Public Lands in 2020

 **CZU Lightning Complex Fire**
Perimeter 86,509 acres (CAL FIRE)*

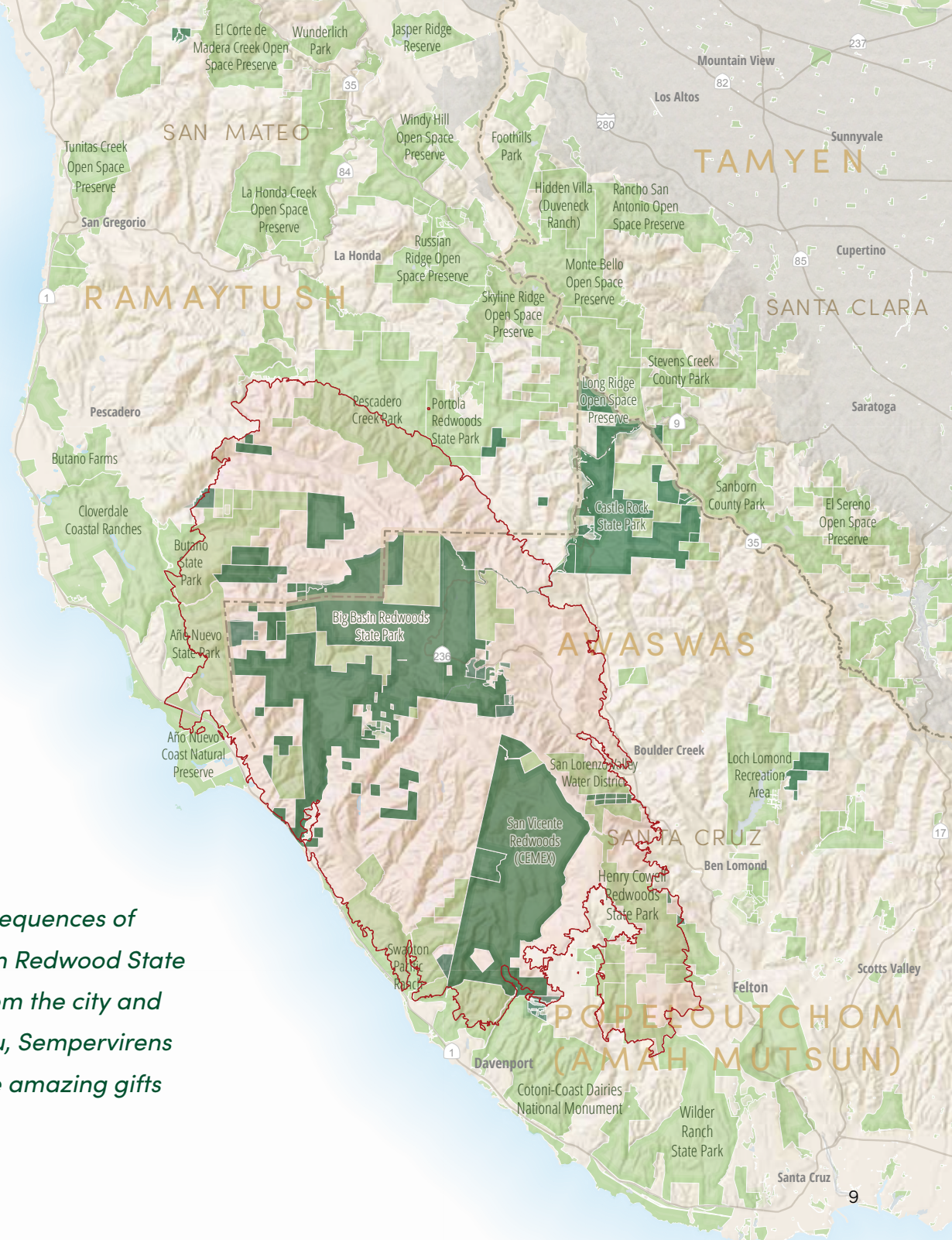
 **Sempervirens Fund: 35,000 acres**
of protected coast redwoods forests
throughout the Santa Cruz Mountains
since 1900

 **Other Protected Land**

 **Private Land**

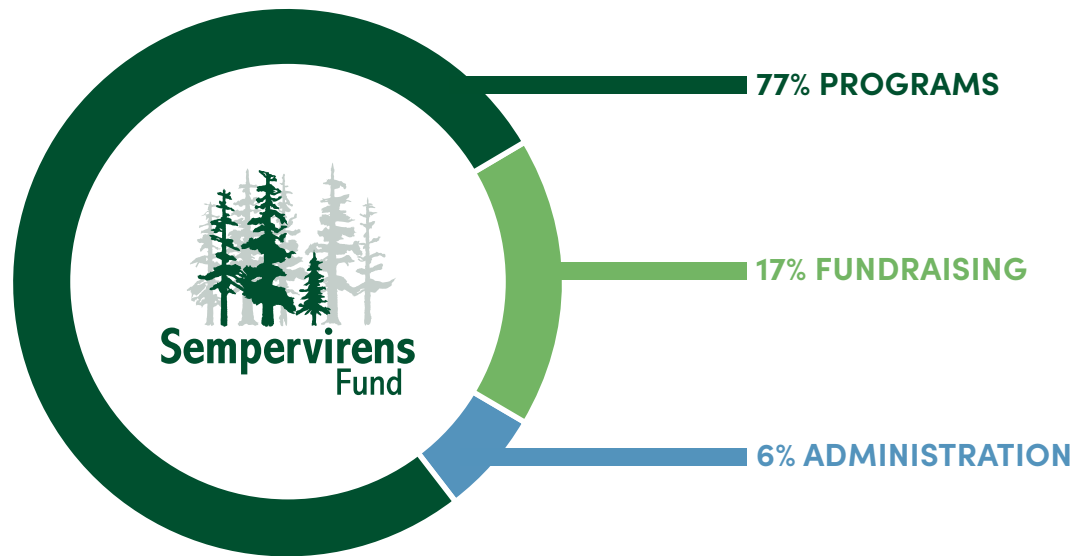
 **The Ohlone Tribal Territory**
Covers all of the main map extent. Language
areas are labeled: Awaswas, Popeloutchom
(Amah Mutsun), Ramatuch, and Tamyen.
Source: native-land.ca

“I am deeply saddened by the devastating consequences of the CZU Lightning Complex Fire on the Big Basin Redwood State Park. It was my go-to place for getting away from the city and feeling the serenity of Mother Nature. Thank you, Sempervirens Fund, for your continuous efforts to preserve the amazing gifts of nature.” –Aniketh Reddy Seelam



Financial Statement

Your support is hard at work. Seventy-seven cents of every dollar goes directly to programs designed to protect and steward redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Thank you!



As a land trust, it is difficult to accurately measure our program efficiency by looking at a single year. Land transactions can take more than five years to finalize, resulting in a significant difference in program expenses from year to year. We, along with many local land trusts, believe a five-year rolling average is the most meaningful way to look at our financial performance.





YOUR IMPACT

CAMERAS
AND AUDIO
MONITORING
UNITS INSTALLED

67

VOLUNTEER AND
INTERN HOURS

410

WATER TANKS
INSTALLED

4

PROGRESS MADE
TO PROTECT
REDWOOD
FORESTS

2,000+ ACRES

CORVID SURVEYS
AND RESEARCH
PROJECTS

10

INVASIVE PLANTS
REMOVED

40 ACRES,
OR 30 FOOTBALL FIELDS



WILDFIRE RECOVERY BY THE NUMBERS



RECOVERY NEEDS
ASSESSMENT VISITS

20

CULVERTS
REPLACED

15



ACRES OF
SEMPERVIRENS
FUND LANDS
BURNED

10,916 ACRES

CZU LIGHTNING
COMPLEX AREA

86,509 ACRES



FIREFIGHTERS WE ARE
FOREVER GRATEFUL TO

350+





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A photograph of a dense forest of tall evergreen trees, likely pines or firs, reaching towards a clear blue sky. The trees are in various shades of green, and the perspective is looking upwards from within the forest.

sempervirens.org