

Mountain Echo

THE NEWSLETTER OF SEMPERVIRENS FUND

FALL 2015

QUIROSTE VALLEY



QUIROSTE VALLEY

Learning from the past and looking to the future

Many people know Año Nuevo State Park for the famous elephant seals, but on the inland side of Highway One lies the Whitehouse Creek watershed with a rich and important history that is lesser known. If you follow Whitehouse Creek from the ridgetop down to the sea, you pass through many distinct vegetation types, demonstrating the diversity of this landscape — maritime chaparral, knobcone pine, coast redwood, coast live oak, riparian, coastal scrub, grassland and coastal sand dunes. The 6,000-acre watershed encompasses the western portion of Big Basin Redwoods State Park and the eastern portion of Año Nuevo.

For thousands of years the Quiroste (pronounced “Keer-osh-tee”) tribe inhabited this area, and in 1769 it was at the Quiroste Valley village that Gaspar de Portolá and his struggling expedition to discover Monterey Bay made first contact with the native people. The Quiroste people helped the visitors and guided them, leading to the expedition’s eventual “discovery” of San Francisco Bay.

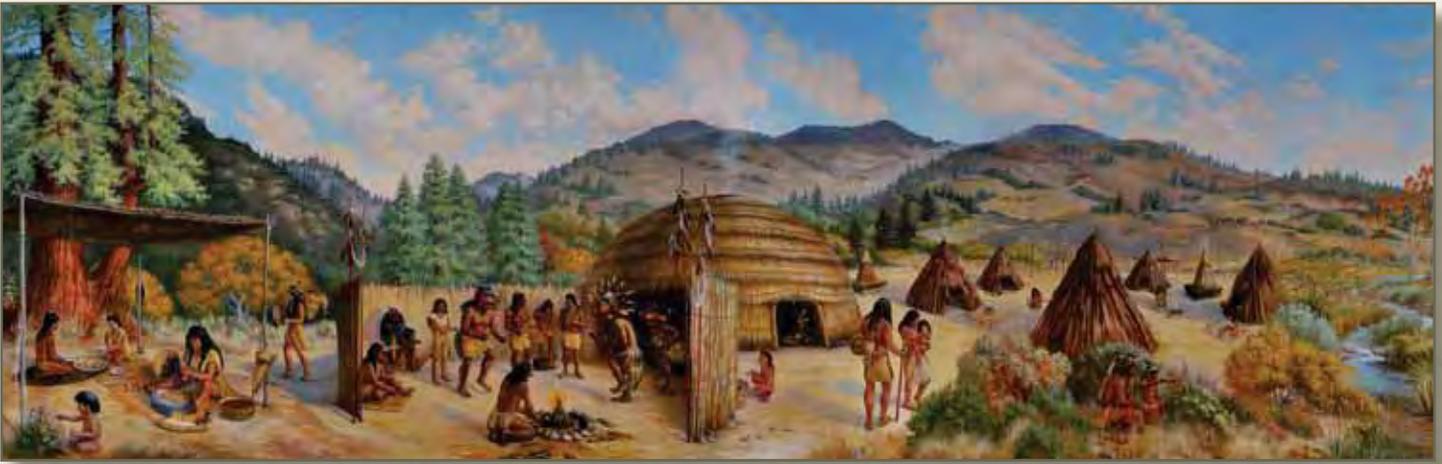
During the subsequent Mission Period, the Quiroste and other tribes declined dramatically in population and lost much of their culture due to disease and religious conversion. But today, through unique partnerships, Sempervirens Fund is working with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, California State Parks, Girl Scouts of Northern California and UC Berkeley researchers to help restore the land where native people once flourished and renew native cultural understanding.

In 2008, State Parks created the Quiroste Valley Cultural Preserve — a 225-acre area within Año Nuevo to “provide for the recognition and protection of its outstanding cultural resources, ancient heritage, and cultural identity” — and agreed to consult with native representatives to establish resource management practices and historical interpretation.



(above left) Members of the Amah Mutsun Stewardship Corps count angelica (flowering in foreground), a plant with ceremonial and medicinal uses for native people. They are studying the plant’s growth response to the removal of invasives.

(L to R) Shelley Ratay, Executive Director, Sempervirens Fund; Valentin Lopez, Chair, Amah Mutsun Tribal Band; Mark Hylkema, Santa Cruz District Archaeologist & Tribal Liaison, California State Parks, meet at Quiroste.



This mural by Ann Thiermann on the UC Santa Cruz campus shows what the Quiroste village looked like, including redwood trees that are still standing today, based upon Father Crespi's firsthand accounts of Portolá's expedition.

Building on this success, Sempervirens Fund provided land trust expertise to facilitate the transfer of a 96-acre conservation easement at the nearby Costanoa Lodge to the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. The Amah Mutsun and their Stewardship Corps are reintroducing traditional native land-management techniques to care for the easement and the Cultural Preserve. They are re-learning and passing on spiritual and ecological traditions to young tribal members and also sharing long-lost stewardship practices with other land managers.

Archeological and ethnobotanical research at Quiroste Valley is bringing to light what native life was like prior to European contact, fundamentally changing our understanding about how native people lived and how they managed the land around them. Researchers are discovering just how significantly the landscape was altered by native "tended garden" practices. There is evidence, for example, that native people made regular use of controlled burns to stimulate seed production for food and animal forage. In the absence of such burns, the landscape has changed over time, with Douglas fir encroaching into areas that were once largely grasslands.

Further up the Whitehouse Creek watershed, Sempervirens Fund worked with the Girl Scouts to create an easement on their Skylark Ranch camp, where thousands of girls come each summer to live on, learn from and fall in love with the land. Purchased in 2012 through generous support from Sempervirens Fund donors, the Skylark easement permanently protects the important natural resources at the camp, including hundreds of old-growth

redwoods, and provides the Girl Scouts with income to keep the camp thriving. Through our work in the watershed, Sempervirens Fund introduced the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band to the Girl Scouts, and tribal members now visit Skylark Ranch each summer to teach the young campers native traditions.

Quiroste Valley and these innovative partnerships are featured on NBC Bay Area's television program, OpenRoad with Doug McConnell, and in a new film by the Bay Area Open Space Council. Watch both videos online on our website, at www.sempervirens.org/quioste. 🌲



The next generation of environmental stewards learns to make abalone shell pendant necklaces from tribal members at the Girl Scout's Skylark Ranch camp.

OFF THE GRID

Google Trekking the Great Park

You probably know that Google Maps allows you to enter Street View mode, giving you a 360-degree panoramic view of a street location. And then you can explore the scene by clicking and dragging your mouse. Cool, right?! Well, the Google Trekker backpack brings this same technology to locations that are only accessible by foot.

The Trekker was first used to map trails in the Grand Canyon. The pack weighs 40 pounds and consists of 15 digital cameras angled to capture 360-degree panoramic views. Lasers reflect off object surfaces to measure the distances and aid in the creation of the 3D view when the photos are stitched together.

Thanks to support from Sempervirens Fund Board Member Austin Swift, we have gained access to this technology through the Google Trekker Loan Program which allows nonprofits to borrow the equipment to collect imagery of hard-to-reach places.

Swift not only helped us apply to the Trekker program but has taken many steps further — 31 miles of steps to be exact. This summer, Swift carried the Trekker pack on the Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail on a three-day backpacking trip with his father. Board, staff and volunteers have also contributed time to map additional trails in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

“There are a lot of educational opportunities we can explore once we gather the Trekker data. Being able to bring 360-degree images into the classroom to teach kids about the forest and then bring them out for a field trip to experience the real thing — that could be a very enriching and engaging program.”

– Austin Swift, Sempervirens Fund Board Member

Trekker map data can be used in many ways: Educational and interpretative programs can be developed using Google Maps and Street View software. The maps can help people plan their hiking and backpacking trips, giving them a better sense of what terrain to expect. And land managers will have another tool to help study trails and surrounding environmental conditions.

When can you see the new maps?! The raw Trekker data requires months of processing before it becomes available via Google Maps. And additional time is required for creating any custom programs. But don't fret — we will let you know as soon as the imagery is publicly available for use. 🌲



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New Name, Same Campaign

Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument

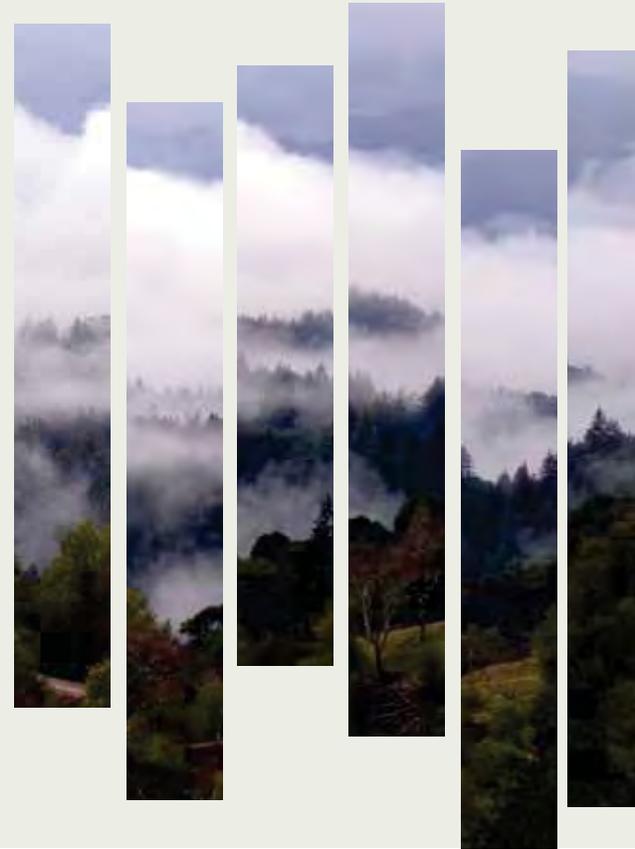
Thanks to caring individuals like you, the magnificent Coast Dairies property is one giant step closer to earning permanent federal protection as a national monument. In August, Senators Boxer and Feinstein introduced legislation that would add this property and five other stunning coastal sites to the California Coastal National Monument. Cotoni-Coast Dairies, the proposed new name for this treasured local landscape, honors both the native Cotoni (pronounced “Cho-toni”) people who inhabited this area for thousands of years and the property’s more recent history as a dairy farm. We need your help urging Congress and President Obama to take action. Join the 13,500 individuals and more than 100 local businesses, organizations and governments who support the monument designation by pledging your name in support at www.cotonicoastdairies.org. 🌲

Stewardship 5.0

Birth of the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network

As Aristotle wisely noted, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Based on this simple yet powerful idea, Sempervirens Fund convened a series of multi-day working sessions this year with two dozen leaders from local, state, and federal agencies, nonprofits, academia, business, resource districts and tribal groups to explore how we can best keep the region healthy and resilient long into the future by sharing information and coordinating our individual land stewardship efforts.

The ambitious and unprecedented Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network is off to an encouraging start. If the nascent project proves successful during its trial period, the group plans to expand to include more participants for even greater impact and would likely hire a network coordinator to facilitate the effort. 🌲



The Land Trust Alliance’s (LTA) Accreditation Commission awards accreditation to land trusts meeting national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands. Sempervirens Fund is proud to be LTA accredited and we are pleased to announce we are undergoing our standard five year accreditation renewal process. The Commission invites written comments related to how we comply with national standards. Please submit comments by November 1, 2015, by any of the following methods:

Web: www.landtrustaccreditation.org, Email: info@landtrustaccreditation.org, Fax: 518-587-3183, or Mail: Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments, 36 Phila St., Ste. 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866



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LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Embodying Redwood Resiliency

Our magnificent coast redwoods inspire awe in part due to their amazing resiliency over the ages. In this newsletter we are thrilled to share with you wonderful projects that your generous support has helped make possible and which embody the resiliency of our redwoods.

With you at our side, we're planning new modern facilities for Castle Rock State Park, making our state parks more resilient so that future generations can continue to enjoy them. We're leading the effort to bring national monument designation to Cotoni-Coast Dairies — not only to bring permanent federal protection to this magnificent property — but also to welcome the Bureau of Land Management into the region as the most robust conservation partner they can be. And we're building deep, strong relationships with stewardship partners such as the Amah Mutsun tribe, as featured in this issue, making our conservation community collectively stronger. The birth of the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network and our co-ownership and collaborative stewardship of San Vicente Redwoods also demonstrate great leaps forward in our resiliency amidst the stressors of reduced state park funding, increased population, forest fragmentation and climate change.



We are also embracing resiliency and change inside the organization that you are so kind to continue to fund. Shelley Ratay is leaving her post as executive director, but will be with us for a bit longer. Shelley made lasting contributions for us over the last year and a half and we wish her the very best. As our board searches for our next ED, our good friend, emeritus executive director Reed Holderman, has agreed to help guide our organizational ship and outstanding staff. In addition, we've added three new board members this year, gaining depth as well as diversity reflective of the communities we serve.

Coast redwoods can grow over 2,000 years old. Our organization is *only* 115 years old, yet I am so heartened to see that with great thanks to our dedicated community of supporters, staff and Board we are exemplifying redwood resiliency in our ongoing efforts to protect the redwoods.

Thank you,

Fred Keeley
Board President



AT WORK IN OUR COMMUNITY

Andrew P. Hill High School

There is nothing like experiencing the redwoods first hand. In March we held our annual redwood education field trip for students of Andrew P. Hill High School in San Jose. Forty students and their biology teacher joined us at Big Basin Redwoods State Park for a day of exploration guided by Web of Life Field School naturalists. We customized the program to both engage the students in redwoods ecology and bring the history of our founder A. P. Hill to life.

Shortly after the field trip, we presented this year’s Tony Look Scholarship — a \$1,000 award given to a graduating A. P. Hill High School senior who is college-bound and dedicated to the community and the environment. This year’s winner was Kevin Dieu who begins his studies in biology at USC this fall. Congratulations, Kevin, and best of luck. 🌲



New Faces at Sempervirens

Pamela Koch We welcome Pamela Koch to our Board of Directors. Pam first immersed herself in redwood conservation in 2012 when she rallied neighbors to raise \$250,000 and partnered with Sempervirens Fund to match those funds and buy the timber rights to Redwoods Meadows Ranch in Bonny Doon. She is a long-time docent naturalist at Año Nuevo State Park, is a member of our Campaign Committee since 2013 and serves on the Board of Coastside State Parks Association. Koch is a former hospital administrator and holds an MBA from Boston University.



Lucia Magaña Our new Office and Events Manager, Lucia Magaña, comes to us with over 10 years of customer service experience and a bookkeeping background. She has worked for Nob Hill Foods, the Sam Liccardo for San Jose Mayor Campaign and Outreach Inc. Lucia proudly participates in the Latina Coalition of Silicon Valley. She holds a dual BA in Political Science and Anthropology from San Jose State University, with a special interest in cultural diversity.



Carrie Drake Following several years as a Development and Marketing Consultant, Carrie Drake joins Sempervirens Fund as the acting Director of Donor Relations and Major Gifts. Carrie was the founding Development Manager at Filoli, a 654-acre historic estate, garden and nature preserve in Woodside. She has a broad background in the nonprofit community, serving on numerous boards, endowment funds and capital campaign committees as well as grassroots fundraising in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Carrie received a BA in English from UCLA.



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UPDATE

GREAT PARK CAMPAIGN

Thanks to the continued, generous support of donors, Sempervirens Fund has already accomplished many of the goals we set out to achieve in the Great Park Campaign. Together, we have protected eight redwood properties totaling 9,284 acres, including the magnificent 8,500-acre San Vicente Redwoods, the largest single, intact redwoods parcel between Silicon Valley and the Pacific Ocean. Two success stories involve conservation easements on Girl Scout-owned properties, helping these beloved camps educate and inspire new generations of environmental stewards. Your gifts made these accomplishments possible. Thank you!

Along with these successes, Sempervirens Fund also was able to purchase land that will become the new main entrance to Castle Rock State Park, one of the best-loved, least-improved state parks. We have started the design process for the entrance and obtained county design approvals required to proceed. As we push toward the goal to improve off-street parking and add restrooms, picnic areas, drinking fountains, a multi-use outdoor amphitheater, trail heads and signage, we need you by our side as much as ever. It is only with your continued support that we'll be able to provide these long-overdue enhancements to Castle Rock State Park and advance the Great Park vision! 🌲

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