A photograph of a small waterfall cascading over moss-covered rocks in a forest. The water is blurred, creating a sense of motion. The rocks are large and covered in vibrant green moss. The background is filled with dense green foliage and trees.

Mountain Echo

THE NEWSLETTER OF SEMPERVIRENS FUND

SUMMER 2019

Meet More Giants



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Some people campaign for bicycle lanes, others champion the arts. You protect redwoods. And already, your investment is helping to build healthy, resilient, and connected redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains; loved by millions and admired the world over.



In this *Mountain Echo*, we present our vision for realizing this magnificent, towering dream. To be successful, we're stepping up our fight for redwoods on all fronts: accelerating our pace of forest protection, making the lands in our care more resilient to climate change and wildfires, and encouraging more visitors to stand among the redwood giants and feel their magnificence.

Caring for the land requires constant awareness and evolution. It also takes both time and money. Thanks to your help, we're able to send our land managers out to our properties with interns from the University of California, Santa Cruz to do restorative and preventive work, such as measuring water flow and creating welcoming rivers for native species like Coho salmon and steelhead to return, breed, and thrive. We're also able to work with partners like the Amah Mutsun Land Trust and Cal Fire on prescribed burns that create fuel breaks to prevent devastating fires from harming or destroying the vast forest treasures under our care.

Our stewardship work ensures the forever part of your donation. As we learn more about redwood ecosystems, we're making them stronger and more adaptive to whatever future they face.

As you read our news and catch up on all the work we do on your behalf, I hope you feel a little taller. Because the path you're on is helping to lead to some of the greatest, most beautiful forests on the planet.

Thank you for sharing our dream,

Thank you,

Sara Barth, Executive Director

On the cover: Jamison Creek.

Meet More Giants

When you drive down 280 or Hwy. 1 and look up at the soft, green vastness cloaking the Santa Cruz Mountains you can't help but feel the enduring pleasure of protecting redwoods.

In that moment, you think, "I had a hand in that." And with this realization comes a deep satisfaction from knowing you're preserving something so timeless, powerful, and utterly beautiful.

We protect redwoods because of the way these great trees make us feel. Humble, at peace, and in awe. But there's another reason we defend redwoods. We're also enchanted by the one-of-kind ecosystems they create. Their home is an otherworldly place of sword ferns and banana slugs, quiet canyons and slithery salamanders,

dripping fog, and impossibly clear creeks. There's nowhere else like it — and these flora and fauna depend on the redwoods for their very survival.

One of the most rewarding parts of our work at Sempervirens Fund is helping people understand the importance of this land by expanding our local state parks. It harkens back to our original role in creating Big Basin State Park in 1902, and our mission of connecting people to the redwoods — these ancient wonders that truly are a unique California treasure.

Big Basin to Get Bigger

This winter, we purchased Jamison Creek: 130 acres of undeveloped and strategically important land located alongside the south-eastern border of Big Basin Redwoods State Park. We first



Jamison Creek

Photo © Russell Ferretti-Hoyle/SVF



became aware of the property more than 10 years ago and were delighted when the landowners Diane and Michael Bigler approached us about buying the land.

The Biglers sold their property to us far below the market price. As longstanding Sempervirens Fund supporters, they know how Jamison Creek and properties like it are rare and sensitive. Like many of our supporters, they feel a duty to protect what we have so that future generations can enjoy it.

Most of the property includes healthy second-growth redwoods and hardwoods like oak, madrone, and bay laurel. At higher elevations, the trees thin out and the sun's rays light up a landscape of maritime chaparral.

Look closely and you'll find evidence of the original redwood forest that stood here for millennia. Sadly, all that's left of these once-great redwoods are giant stumps emerging from the sorrel-covered floor. Still showing the telltale notches from the loggers' springboard, these relics of the past are important, because they motivate us to do all we can for these trees.

A Land Bridge for Countless Species

What makes the property especially significant is its value to local wildlife. Mountain lions and bobcats have been spotted here. Salamanders, woodrats, and woodpeckers live, breed, and shelter in these hushed forest canyons. Jamison Creek will also act as a wildlife corridor, protecting deer, coyotes, and other species as they move freely and undisturbed between the forests of San Vicente, Big Basin, and beyond.

This is the way you help save redwoods. One donation at a time. One supporter at a time. One property at a time. Before our eyes, fragments of forest will grow into a glorious landscape of interconnected forests permanently protected for redwoods, for wildlife, for us all. 🌲



Gazos Creek Property

Photo © Big Creek Lumber

A Land Deal Like No Other

Spectacular Gazos Creek

You may have read about it or seen it on the news: a spectacular land deal — led by our friends at Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) — that protects 937 acres of land on the border of Butano State Park. Did you know that Sempervirens Fund had a role to play in this land deal? It was a unique partnership between land conservationists and the timber industry — Big Creek Lumber, to be precise. It was an effort that took years of planning, negotiating, and finger-crossing, and one that we believe represents a promising model for future land conservation partnerships.

Valued at \$11.7 million, the conservation easement covers two parcels bordering Butano State Park. The larger property, 617-acre Valencia Creek, will continue to be owned by POST, which will turn the 320-acre Gazos Creek property over to Sempervirens Fund later in the year. Our staff and volunteers will care for the Gazos Creek property until it's ready to be transferred into Butano State Park for all to enjoy. Until

then, we will need your support to help cover the costs of stewardship. We will know more about the property and its needs after we assess the restoration opportunities of the property.

A Rare Refuge for Wildlife

What are we protecting? The Gazos Creek watershed is cloaked in mature, second-growth redwoods and stands of old-growth redwoods that haven't been touched since Big Creek Lumber purchased the land 50 years ago. This is extremely rare habitat, one of only seven areas in the region suitable for the endangered marbled murrelet and other species struggling for land. The clean waters of Gazos Creek, filtered through redwoods roots, are vital spawning grounds for returning Coho salmon and steelhead.

One day soon, this beautiful creek, lush forest, and pristine habitat will be visited and loved by everyone. Until then, and with your help, we intend to give this wild and scenic forest the care and respect it deserves. 🌲

Diane Bigler

On the Future of Jamison Creek

When Diane Bigler and her husband Michael were looking for the perfect place to retire, Jamison Creek near the town of Boulder Creek was the natural choice. It was wildly beautiful. They adored the Santa Cruz Mountains, where Michael grew up. And their children and grandson loved exploring the redwoods on the property as much as they did. Although some parts are so steep they remain unexplored — at least by the Bigler family — who are now proud to pass on this magnificent forest to everyone. We interviewed Diane to give a behind-the-scenes look at Jamison Creek.

Q: How did you come to own the property, and what were your first impressions?

We actually purchased three parcels and merged them into one. They were so close to Boulder Creek yet felt so remote — it was the perfect place for us. I remember when we visited the final parcel with our realtor and she pointed out the French broom [an invasive species and a real challenge to work with]. She called it the “lady bug plant,” since it was spring, and they were hatching. I knew right then that we had our work cut out for us.

Q: You didn’t build on Jamison Creek. Did you always plan on preserving it?

At first, we wanted to build there — but it proved too challenging and expensive. So, we decided to keep the land undeveloped, and planned to simply take care of it the best we could. I’m glad we did. It’s such a beautiful, pristine area. It’s so quiet and peaceful there.

Q: You took great care of the land — the property was in great shape when we took it over.

That makes me smile. It was important to us to care for the property. We bought three sizes of broom pullers to clear the French broom ourselves. The initial clearing took months. After that, we made it an annual event. Our whole family helped.

Q: What do you love most about the property?

That’s easy: the creek itself. In spring, I would sit for hours just listening to the trickling water. It’s also thick with redwoods. We’ve always known how special the redwoods are. You never forget the look on a person’s face when they see them for the first time. And the work my family and I put into caring for the property — it’s filled with so many memories for us.

Q: Why did you decide to sell the property?

We both realized that the property was getting too much for us to care for. Since it’s heavy with redwoods, we decided to call Sempervirens Fund. It was easy working with the Sempervirens Fund team — the whole process was right on schedule from start to finish.

Photo © Tom McNeil



Bobcat at Jamison Creek Property



Jamison Creek Property

Photo © Russell Ferretti-Hoyle/SVF

“With Jamison Creek, more people will be able to see and appreciate the beauty of the Santa Cruz Mountains.”

— Diane Bigler

Q: Your call made a lot of people here ecstatic.

The property is so close to where our 119-year journey began, Big Basin Redwoods State Park.

We’ve been donating to Sempervirens Fund for years, and we’re happy it worked out. And we were pleased with the offer you gave. All in all, it seemed to us that the timing was right — and everything fell into place.

Q: How does it make you feel knowing that the property will one day be part of Big Basin?

It makes me very happy. It made sense to us that we sell it to you in the hope of connecting it with Big Basin. We used to hike from Big Basin right

through Jamison Creek to our home. But more than anything, we want the land to be protected, so that future generations can see and feel all that we experienced when it was in our family.

Q: Has conservation always been important to you?

I think we need more public lands for people to enjoy and experience nature. With Jamison Creek, more people will be able to see and appreciate the beauty of the Santa Cruz Mountains. We’re so very grateful to all Sempervirens Fund donors for helping protect this land that we love and cared for, and for all the other properties you care for. 🌲

Our Vision Moving Forward

The Way Ahead for Redwoods

Because of you, Sempervirens Fund can protect and conserve redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains and the plants and animals that make them home, preserving the balance of nature now and for future generations. Our tools are conservation and restoration shaped by foresight. Acre by protected acre, these tools are helping us realize a vision of large, healthy redwood forests, linked by habitat corridors that span both public and private lands.

Picking Up the Pace

In the next 10 years, we aim to dramatically accelerate our pace of protection for the redwoods, preserving thousands of new acres. Many redwood properties are about to come on the market — we need to ensure they will never be developed, degraded, or destroyed.

The ways we do this are powerful and permanent. We purchase property directly or work with landowners to put a conservation easement over their property, thereby ensuring the natural resource values are protected.

The lands we protect are strategically chosen for their ecological and conservation values, including the size and quality of their redwood groves, the range of native plants and animals, the quality of their waterways, and proximity to existing protected areas. Many of these lands serve as habitat corridors for pumas, bobcats, and deer, or nesting habitats for marbled murrelets.

Caring for the Land

Organizations must adapt to change — and Sempervirens Fund is no exception. In the past, our role was quite simple: we bought land, helped restore it, and worked with California State Parks to create new parks or expand established ones. Now, it can take us a decade or more to turn lands over to State Parks. That means that we are actively caring for the

properties we purchase (aka stewardship) much longer than before.

The stewardship process is complex and unique for each property. Some have been seriously scarred by unsustainable logging practices. Others require forest thinning to ensure the future prosperity of healthy trees. Most have invasive species (e.g., French broom, periwinkle, and English ivy) that must be removed for their future health.

Along the way, we've learned so much about caring for the redwoods, their environs, waterways, and all the plants and animals that live among them. We are proud of our stewardship activities and want to pass on our techniques to others by encouraging learning and research on our lands. We are sharing that knowledge responsibly with other similar organizations — both locally and nationally — and will continue expanding these connections.

It's no longer a best practice to simply buy a property and let nature reclaim it. We need to actively engage in repairing, restoring, and fostering the delicate balance of life on our properties. We will be asking for your help both as a volunteer — helping tend to these forests — and through your generosity in helping us cover the costs of tending to them. Buying the property is now just the first step — and stewardship needs are very costly.



Redwood sorrel after spring rains

Photo © Russell Ferretti-Hoyle/SVF

Science Will Lead the Way

The more we know about redwoods, the better we can help them. Science-based initiatives with established friends and new partners are going to build on our understanding of redwoods and how they benefit both the land and residents of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

The Stewardship Network and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, for example, are helping us research how climate change affects our mountain ecosystems — and what we can do to ensure the health of our properties. We're also relying on reliable science from our friends at Stanford University; University of California, Santa Cruz; and San Jose State University to guide us as we care for the lands we own and restore.

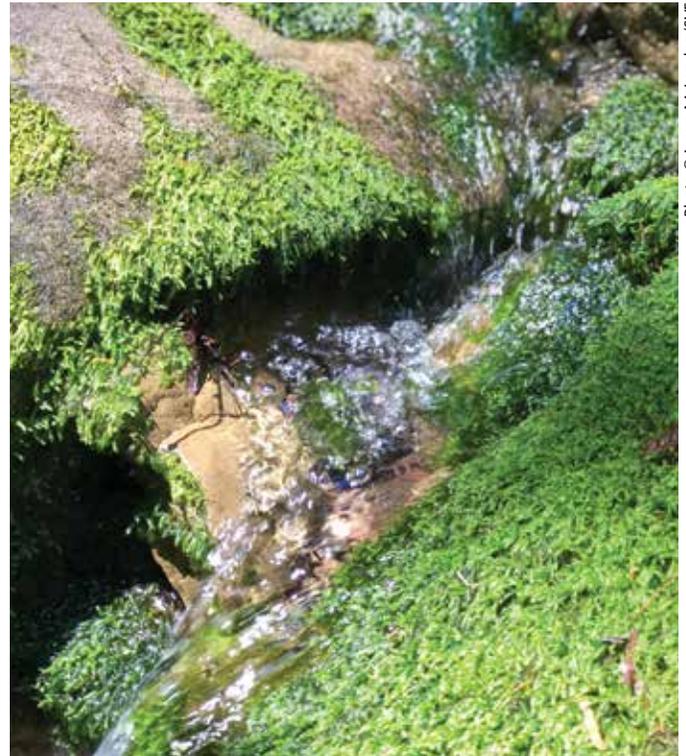
Redwoods are some of our most beneficial allies in helping against the deleterious effects of climate change, reducing tons of carbon emissions in their lifetimes. They are also naturally fire resistant, and we continue to work with Cal Fire, the Amah Mutsun Land Trust, and others to create fire breaks on our properties and to schedule controlled burns to prevent devastating wildfires.

Redwoods — Make it Personal

Conservationists are born outdoors. From our start, Sempervirens Fund has tried to bring people face to face with redwoods, so that they can understand why this is a world worth preserving.

Most people meet their first redwood in a public park. We plan on expanding our great local redwood parks, sharing new properties with the public, and helping make the land more accessible for everyone.

Soon we will be opening the new Robert C. Kirkwood Entrance to Castle Rock State Park, which will serve as a portal to help raise awareness and access to public lands and promote visitation in the Santa Cruz Mountains. We'll also be working with partners like the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County on the public access plan for our large, park-sized San Vicente Redwoods property, which we co-own with POST and which has a conservation easement held by Save the Redwoods League.



Jamison Creek

Photo © Laura McLendon/SVF

How We'll Get There

Sempervirens Fund remains a lean and efficient team, which gives us greater control over our projects and more impact for your contributions on the forests you love. Our goal is to continue to improve as a sustainable organization now and for the future.

We will increase the diversity of our board by adding new board members representing local communities. Having a board that understands the high-tech world of Silicon Valley and the ecological needs of the Santa Cruz Mountains will help us reach out to new park visitors and donors to share our vision.

To accomplish our vision for a large, vibrant set of healthy redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains, we need your continued support. Look for our upcoming campaigns — delivered through the mail, on our website, and through our social media outlets. We will also be sharing with you greater details of our strategy for land conservation, and how you can get more involved.

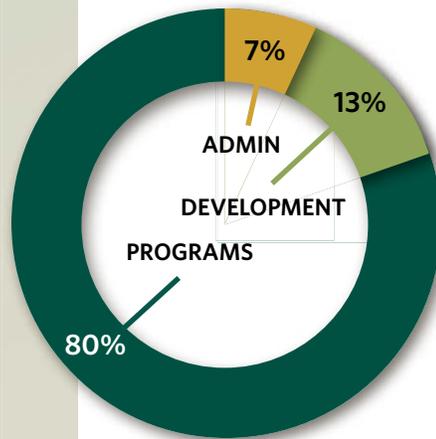
Thank you for being part of our epic journey forward. We know that with your help, the best is yet to come. 🌲

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We gratefully acknowledge our current board members and those who rotated off in 2018:

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Richard Conniff
Gage Dayton, Ph.D.
Meagan Demitz
Kevin Flynn
William N. Harris
Fred Keeley
Pamela Koch
Dan Martin (Rotated off)
Robert Moles (Rotated off)
Amanda Montez
Kent Putnam
Evan Siegel
Diane Talbert
Vishy Venugopalan
Jacqueline Wender
Stephen N. Wyckoff, J.D.

Financial Information



As a land trust, it is difficult to measure our program efficiency by looking at a single year. Land transactions can take several years to finalize, and acquisition costs can result in significant differences in program expenses from year to year. We, along with many local land trusts, believe that a five-year rolling average is the most meaningful way to look at our financial performance. Including the cost of land acquisitions, Sempervirens Fund program costs represent 80% of our budget over the last five years.

2018 Accomplishments

Land Purchases

- Cotoni Coast Ridge (Jan 2018) — 106 acres
- Castle Rock West (Oct 2018) — 50 acres
- Jamison Creek (Nov 2018) — 130 acres

Stewardship Projects

- **Large Woody Debris Stream Enhancement Project:** Created pools for Coho salmon and steelhead to return and spawn on San Vicente Creek.
- **Deadman Gulch Restoration Reserve Project:** Restored 110 acres of forestland.
- **Road Rocking and Improvements Project:** Completed six miles of road at San Vicente Redwoods, which will reduce erosion to salmonid-bearing streams and improve access for management and emergencies.

Science Projects

- **Sempervirens 236 Property:** Conducted the first monitoring results from our Old Growth Redwoods Restoration Forestry Project (the first project of its kind in the Santa Cruz Mountains).
- **Whalen Property:** 1,800-foot road removed to reduce erosion and minimize trespassing.

For more information on these land purchases and stewardship programs, please visit our website, www.sempervirens.org.



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Create a Lasting Legacy

When you include a gift to Sempervirens Fund in your will or estate plan, you create a living legacy that will permanently protect the redwood forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains for future generations.

Imagine sustaining life in all its forms, supporting healthy forests, clean rivers and streams, and creating a safe haven for wildlife, endangered plants, and trees. Moreover, your legacy gift will provide future generations redwood forests to enjoy.

For more information, call us at **(650) 949-1453 ext. 1**. We are happy to help you create your legacy. 🌲



Photo © Ian Bornarth Photography