

**EMBARGOED UNTIL THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 2019 AT 8:00 A.M.**

**MEDIA RELEASE**



**Contacts:**

**Sara Barth, Sempervirens Fund**  
[sbarth@sempervirens.org](mailto:sbarth@sempervirens.org)  
415-699-3477



**Chris Spohrer, California State Parks**  
[chris.spohrer@parks.ca.gov](mailto:chris.spohrer@parks.ca.gov)  
831-234-5140



**Peg Danielson, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks**  
[peg@thatsmypark.org](mailto:peg@thatsmypark.org)  
831-251-0822

**Major Upgrades to Castle Rock State Park Increase Access, Amenities, Tech Features, Programs, and More to Benefit All Visitors**

*Park improvements are the product of an innovative partnership among Sempervirens Fund, California State Parks, and Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks*

**Los Gatos, Calif. (August 1, 2019)** — As the Bay Area enjoys the heart of summer, Sempervirens Fund, California State Parks, and Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks today announced that it is more convenient than ever to enjoy one of the region’s outdoor recreation jewels, Castle Rock State Park, with the opening of the new, environmentally sensitive and accessible Robert C. Kirkwood Entrance. It includes fully accessible restrooms and pathways, a drinking water station, greatly expanded parking, charging stations for electric cars, free Wi-Fi, a trail map app, picnic areas, a sculptural climbing-structure for kids, and an amphitheater and other spaces for education programs and events. This new entrance is intended to bring the facilities at Castle Rock State Park into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and help make it a welcoming place for all.

Castle Rock’s location along Skyline Boulevard at the crest of the magnificent Santa Cruz Mountains makes it the closest state park to Silicon Valley and the southern San Francisco Peninsula and a portal to the spectacular parks and protected areas in the larger landscape. The new park entrance connects to a variety of existing trails, including the iconic Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail, which Sempervirens Fund created in 1976. It runs for 31 miles from the ridgeline of the Santa Cruz Mountains all the way down to the dramatic coastline north of Santa Cruz.

The facilities at the new 33-acre park entrance were carefully designed to be environmentally sensitive and include solar power, permeable paving, features to capture stormwater runoff and recharge the local aquifer, and a state-of-the-art water treatment process. Sempervirens Fund, in collaboration with the Amah Mutsun Land Trust and the Muwekma Ohlone tribe, is restoring the property, which was formerly a Christmas tree farm, to a natural landscape with black oaks and many other native plant species.

“Sempervirens Fund purchased this property in 2011 as part of our commitment to protect and restore redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains for wildlife to inhabit and people to enjoy,” said Sempervirens Fund Executive Director Sara Barth. “It reflects our most-recent investment in continuing to build and enhance Castle Rock and other state parks in the Santa Cruz Mountains.”

“Out of the ashes of the State Parks closure crisis in 2011 came this vision,” Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks Executive Director Bonny Hawley said. “We are pleased to work with California State Parks and Sempervirens Fund on this innovative project that will improve the visitor experience at Castle Rock and ensure the long-term vitality of the park.”

The \$8.7 million project, funded almost entirely by Sempervirens Fund donors, is the result of an innovative partnership between the non-profit Sempervirens Fund, California State Parks, and non-profit Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks. It represents the biggest recent investment in improving the visitor experience for any of the State Parks in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

“We have been delighted to work closely with California State Parks and Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks, REI, and many other partners on this innovative partnership to expand the park and create a welcoming entrance facility that makes visiting and exploring the park easier for people from all walks of life,” said Barth. “This public-private partnership allowed us to accomplish things that would not have been possible otherwise and we hope it can be a model for future collaborations to benefit our State Park system.”

The entrance is named in honor of former State Controller Robert C. Kirkwood, who represented much of Santa Clara County in the state assembly before being named Controller by Governor Earl Warren in 1953. The Kirkwood family are longtime supporters of Sempervirens Fund and were the project’s lead donors. They once ranched land that is now part of Castle Rock State Park.

Castle Rock State Park — a jewel of Bay Area hiking and rock climbing — is filled with 34-miles of trails, two camping areas with a total of 26 campsites, redwood groves, stunning vistas, and otherworldly sandstone rock formations that have made it a rock-climbing mecca.

“There’s no other place in California like Castle Rock. We want to encourage all visitors to explore this land and respect its natural features and wildlife,” said California State Parks District Superintendent, Santa Cruz District, Chris Spohrer.

“We are at our finest when we are working collaboratively with our partners,” added Spohrer. “The dedicated support of Sempervirens Fund and Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks is helping us create a more sustainable park system by improving the visitor experience and making the system more relevant to a broader and more diverse population.”

Initial preservation efforts of Castle Rock Ridge began in 1908 when Santa Clara County Judge Joseph Welch purchased 60 acres to save it from the logging companies. Later, pioneering Silicon Valley technologist Russell Varian, who made a key contribution to the development of radar, secured an option to purchase land with the intention of donating it to California State Parks. When he died before the purchase could be completed, Sempervirens Fund stepped

forward and purchased and donated more than 500 acres in his memory, establishing Castle Rock State Park in 1968.

Since that initial donation, Sempervirens Fund has given State Parks more than 3,500 additional acres, helping Castle Rock State Park to expand to its current size of approximately 5,400 acres. While the new entrance land is currently owned by Sempervirens Fund, it will be operated by State Parks and Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks, and the plan is for it to ultimately be added to the park's acreage.

For more information on Castle Rock State Park and other lands protected by Sempervirens Fund, and to get involved, visit [www.sempervirens.org](http://www.sempervirens.org). To plan a visit to the park, visit [www.thatsmypark.org/castlerock](http://www.thatsmypark.org/castlerock).

###

### **About Sempervirens Fund**

Land trust Sempervirens Fund buys, protects, restores and cares for redwood forests and open spaces in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Since its founding in 1900, it has permanently protected more than 53 square miles of local redwood forests and watersheds for people, wildlife, and future generations. Sempervirens helped create California's first state park, Big Basin Redwoods, as well as Butano and Castle Rock State Parks, and established the 30-mile Skyline-to-the-Sea-Trail. Supported by many individuals, foundations, and corporations, it currently owns and cares for more than 11,000 acres — an area three times the size of Golden Gate Park. Learn more at [www.sempervirens.org](http://www.sempervirens.org).

### **About California State Parks**

California Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks) provides for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural, cultural and historical resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation for current and future generations to enjoy. With increased urbanization, the establishment of park units and recreation areas accessible to the major population centers of the state has become particularly important. Specific activities include: stewardship of natural resources, historic, cultural and archeological sites, and artifacts and structures; provision of interpretive services for park visitors; construction and maintenance of campsites, trails, visitor centers, museums, and infrastructure such as roads and water systems; and creation of recreational opportunities such as hiking, bicycling, fishing, swimming, horseback riding, jogging, camping, picnicking, and off-highway vehicle recreation. The system consists of 280 parks, beaches, trails, wildlife areas, open spaces, off-highway vehicle areas, and historic sites. Parks is responsible for approximately 1.6 million acres of land, including over 343 miles of coastline, 991 miles of lake, reservoir and river footage, 15,000 campsites and alternative camping facilities, and 5,300 miles of motorized and non-motorized trails.

### **About Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks**

Established in 1976, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks (Friends) is a vital partner with California State Parks, creatively working to ensure our cherished local parks and beaches are thriving and available to all. Friends' innovative and collaborative community partnership provides support and investment for education, equity and inclusion, conservation, facilities improvements, historic preservation and cultural events. Friends also operates six ParkStores, offering nature- and history-themed merchandise for sale to benefit local parks and beaches. ParkStore locations include Natural Bridges, New Brighton, Santa Cruz Mission, Seacliff, Wilder Ranch and Online. Learn more at [www.ThatsMyPark.org](http://www.ThatsMyPark.org) or via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest.