

Sempervirens Fund

Impact Report 2019





Dear Friends

Opening the Robert C. Kirkwood Entrance to Castle Rock State Park was the highlight of 2019 for Sempervirens Fund. Thanks to your significant support and volunteerism, the park now has a state-of-the-art entrance that invites all to explore the redwoods and rock formations of the Santa Cruz Mountains. We anticipated that regular hikers and climbers would be pleased—and they are, giving it rave reviews. Less expected, but equally wonderful, is that the entrance has spurred the creation of programs that bring disadvantaged kids to experience nature and has inspired many to visit a state park for the first time.

More visitors to our parks, combined with more threats posed by climate change, makes it more important than ever that we expand the network of protected lands. Your generosity allowed Sempervirens Fund to conserve an additional 640 acres this year. Filice Ranch

and Gazos Creek, our two newest redwood properties, fill ecologically critical gaps in our conservation network.

With these new acquisitions, Sempervirens Fund owns 11,639 acres of magnificent, irreplaceable redwood forests. We protect the investment that you have made in these forests by working to improve their health and resilience. In 2019, this meant restoring native plants, removing invasive species, monitoring wildlife, improving habitat conditions, enhancing water quality, and reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire.

What's next? In 2020, we have some innovative forest restoration projects planned for San Vicente Redwoods, a large, park-sized property that you helped us to protect. We will be working to open publicly accessible trails on the property and we will continue to seek new additions to our protected lands.

We are honored by your trust and appreciative of your ongoing support.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sara Barth". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sara Barth, Executive Director



on the cover: Redwoods, new growth. Lagomarsino property preserved by Sempervirens Fund. photo: Ann Blanchard



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left: Ian Rowbotham and property manager Nadia Hamey checking out Mill Creek on our San Vicente Redwoods property. photo: Ian Bornarth

You Made Forests Whole

640 Acres Went from Unprotected to Uninterrupted

Thanks to you, 2019 was a year of making forests whole, protecting habitat, and connecting preserved land for people and wildlife. With the preservation of two properties, you saved 640 acres that were right next to preserved forests and at risk of being lost to development.



At the headwaters of Scott Creek, Filice Ranch was an unprotected inholding in the San Vicente Redwoods that you helped preserve. Its 320 acres of redwoods, grasslands, wetlands, and chaparral—once the site of ranching, timber harvesting, movie filming, and potentially Prohibition-defying activities—can now be restored. Filice Ranch boasts stands of the threatened Santa Cruz manzanita, prime habitat for mountain lions and possibly the endangered marbled murrelet, as well as ponds and structures that can help in managing the immense San Vicente Redwoods.

Further north, in a seeming wilderness next to Butano State Park, lies the 320-acre Gazos property, which was once owned by Big Creek Lumber. Unharvested for a century, older second-growth and old-growth redwoods, knobcone pine, and chaparral cover the property. Now, you have preserved this former inholding including occupied marbled murrelet habitat, a tributary for rare central California coast steel-head habitat, and an important existing trail connection through Butano State Park.

With your continued support, we will care for Gazos Creek Redwoods until it can be added to the State Park.

“Thanks to our donors these crucial properties stitch together larger landscapes—connecting wildlife corridors, keeping streams flowing clean, and of course protecting our beloved redwoods.”

– Diane Talbert, Board President

Land conservation is a “long game”—protecting, restoring, and caring for the land’s critical resources forever. Your dedication made it possible to preserve these inholdings when they became available for the first time in more than 50 years. Had they been developed, the impacts of habitat loss would have rippled into neighboring forests making it harder for wildlife to thrive. Instead, you established uninterrupted wildlife corridors, expanded habitat restoration, and created future recreation potential for you and future generations to enjoy.

“Thanks to our donors these crucial properties stitch together larger landscapes ... protecting our beloved redwoods.”

Diane Talbert, Board President



You Protected Wildlife and Habitat Like Never Before

Wildlife Monitoring Helps Us Share the San Vicente Redwoods

You helped us better understand San Vicente Redwoods through cutting-edge research so that wildlife and people will be able to enjoy this forest. It has been proven that getting outdoors can make us healthier and happier, and the connection to nature helps us understand the need to protect it. But as habitat becomes less and less available, ensuring our time in nature has as little impact as possible on wildlife is paramount. Thanks to you, we completed the first year of a wildlife monitoring project that can help us adapt management plans based on the actual behaviors and needs of wildlife in the San Vicente Redwoods.

With 43 strategically placed monitoring stations, we are able to see and hear how wildlife use and move on the property. Each station has a motion sensor-activated camera and an acoustic recorder. This pairing provides a broader view of wildlife activity since the acoustic recorders can capture evidence of birds not caught by cameras. Sounds of specific bird species can even be parsed from the audio. This is particularly crucial for monitoring

conditions in endangered marbled murrelet habitat. The seabirds' eggs can fall prey to jays, ravens, and crows, which tend to follow human presence in hopes of crumbs. The ability to see if public access leads to an increase in these birds can identify whether any changes in use are needed to help protect murrelets.

With this first year of data, we can compare when, where, and how wildlife use the forest before and after public access. Camera monitoring also helped in placing currently planned trails to minimize disruption to wildlife pathways and avoid mountain lion dens. During the next two years of monitoring, we will be able to see if the presence of people significantly impacts wildlife's behavior or movement in the forest and how we can minimize the effects.

Management of the land can also be adapted with knowledge of wildlife movement and occupancy. With data on what species use areas at different times, projects can be scheduled when they will affect less wildlife and can be added to support

specific wildlife like the Olive-sided Flycatcher, whose declining population prefers forest edges and disturbed areas as opposed to continuous, closed canopy. A sensitive species like this could be monitored as habitat conditions potentially change—a trail edge or other opening could be a beneficial addition. Wildlife monitoring has ever-growing potential to help balance needs in the San Vicente Redwoods through adaptive land management.

“This expansive wildlife monitoring project not only gives us a peek behind the curtain on wildlife movement and habitat use that’s critical for us to weigh the impacts of public access, but will also provide information valuable to the entire region’s conservation and research efforts.”

– Ian Rowbotham, Land Stewardship Manager

Thanks to you, this invaluable project can inform future trails, land management, and a deeper regional understanding of how land can be shared by people and wildlife for generations to come!

“This expansive wildlife monitoring project . . . provide[s] information valuable to the entire region’s conservation and research efforts.”

Ian Rowbotham, Land Stewardship Manager



You Built Partnerships and Parks

Two New Opportunities to Enjoy the Redwoods for Generations to Come

In 2019, we celebrated the completion of a historic project. Thanks to your support, the construction of the Robert C. Kirkwood Entrance to Castle Rock State Park was completed and opened to the public. This project highlights the legacy you and fellow supporters have built across decades—establishing and growing Castle Rock State Park.



Now, the Kirkwood Entrance has been created through a new model of public-private partnerships and, thanks to you, important 21st century amenities will welcome visitors for generations to come.

Since opening, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks and California State Parks operate the Kirkwood Entrance together. Friends provides visitor services while Parks manages maintenance, security, and operations of the modern entrance. Beyond necessities like restrooms, special features including a Ethnobotanical Demonstration Garden, amphitheater, and event space are connecting more people with the park. The Kirkwood Entrance is generating increased revenue, which helps manage the park, showing the model can be economically sustainable.

With your support, we're continuing to work with partners Peninsula Open Space Trust, Save the Redwoods League, and Land Trust of Santa Cruz County to preserve another park-sized forest for people and wildlife to enjoy—the San Vicente Redwoods. At 8,500 acres, the largest privately



held redwood forest in the Santa Cruz Mountains has different areas, each with their own needs and much to offer. The property is managed with our visionary conservation plan, which protects all old-growth redwoods. Through careful planning and research, we can protect and restore critical habitats and provide public access to this inspiring place.



“The entrance invites people of all ages and abilities to come and enjoy being outdoors in open space and nature. There is something for everyone.”

Berenice McDevitt, Park Visitor

You Healed Habitat

Restoring Natural Conditions for Healthy Streams, Forests, and Fisheries

You healed habitat in 2019, helping to restore San Vicente Redwoods from damaging human impacts over the past century. The effects of clear-cutting, mining, and railroads created unnatural conditions that still affect the health of this forest today. Because of you, innovative stewardship techniques are setting its streams, forests, and fisheries on a healthier trajectory so they can be enjoyed by people and wildlife for generations to come.

More than 80 miles of roads crisscross San Vicente Redwoods, presenting a challenge to minimize sediment entering its streams, potentially hurting water quality and habitat. With significant efforts focused on reducing erosion from these existing roads, improving fire roads with new gravel, and removing unnecessary roads to restore the forest floor, conditions are vastly improving.

Some sediment in creeks would once have been trapped by fallen trees—not only improving water quality downstream but also providing critical habitat for threatened anadromous fish like Coho salmon and steelhead to spawn. Many in-stream trees had been removed over the years during past

logging and mining to increase water flow and reduce potential damage they could cause during a flood. Today, we know fallen redwoods are integral to life in the forest, whether in streams or on the forest floor where they provide habitat for wildlife, plants, and fungi.

To reestablish these crucial places a Large Woody Debris Project carefully selected trees from areas that were too densely grown, a result of past clear-cutting, and stunted by the competition for space, sunlight, and water, and strategically placed them in San Vicente Creek. In addition to supporting life in the stream and on the forest floor, moving these trees also allows the remaining redwoods to grow larger canopy habitat, store more carbon from the air, and better utilize resources to weather droughts, fires, and climate change conditions. An increased number of deep pools, gravel bars, and valuable habitat have already formed as a result of these exciting projects.

While a lack of fallen trees affected plants and wildlife in the San Vicente Redwoods, so too did much of another plant—*Clematis vitalba*. The

aggressive, non-native plant known as “old man’s beard” overgrows and suffocates all vegetation in its path—even young redwood trees. When the forests’ native plants and trees are lost to clematis, so are their abilities to provide habitat and maintain water quality. You helped remove clematis across 30 acres near the creek in 2019, reducing its stranglehold on the forest and wildlife.

However, clematis isn’t the only thing choking streams in the San Vicente Redwoods. Further upstream, an outdated, unused dam on Mill Creek is blocking both fish and the gravel sediment they need for spawning. With your continued support, we plan to remove this ancillary dam as the culmination of these projects to improve this vital watershed for salmon: reducing erosion from roads; large woody debris trapping sediment, creating pool habitat and reactivating the historical floodplain; and removing clematis to restore native riparian vegetation. Thanks to you, these improved conditions are restoring healthy forests, streams, and fisheries.



“Active stewardship and management are critical for protecting and maintaining the ecological integrity of our properties.”

Gage Dayton, Ph.D.

Board Member and Science Advisory Panel Chair

You Prepared for Fire

Protecting Homes Through Land Management

You protected people and wildlife by preparing our forests for wildfire. Fire plays an important role in California's ecosystems—some species even rely on it—but wildfires have become more intense and frequent, impacting huge landscapes. As populations in and around the Santa Cruz Mountains grow and expand into wildland areas, preventing a catastrophic wildfire from threatening lives and homes is vital. Because of you,

the immense San Vicente Redwoods and nearby communities are better protected from fire through careful land management.

We are fighting fire with fire. As temperatures rise, dry brush becomes potential fuel to spread flames across forests and into tree canopies. With enough fuel, blazes grow fast, hot, and practically unstoppable. Your support, and the help of CalFire

and Amah Mutsun Land Trust, allows us to reintroduce prescribed burns—small, controlled fires long utilized by native people—to reduce overabundant fuels and revitalize the habitat.

Brush is not the only thing growing too densely for comfort and increasing the potential for a disastrous fire. After past clear-cut logging in San Vicente Redwoods, trees grew back clustered tightly together, inhibiting their growth and fire resistance. Last year, using restoration forestry techniques, smaller trees were carefully selected for removal to allow remaining trees to grow faster and better survive fire, so they can provide habitat long into the future.

This land has burned before. To protect surrounding communities, you helped plan and maintain shaded fuel breaks and strategic gaps in understory vegetation, which act as speedbumps slowing fire down by removing fuel. Key access roads also received maintenance and new gravel, ensuring fire equipment can get where it is needed.





“Thank you for helping to protect the forest, the wildlife that calls it home, and the people who live near it.”

Sara Barth, Executive Director

Your Impact by the Numbers



640
ACRES
PROTECTED



54
MARBLED MURRELET
DETECTIONS



30 ACRES
CLEMATIS
REMOVED



8
MILES OF ROAD
FIXED

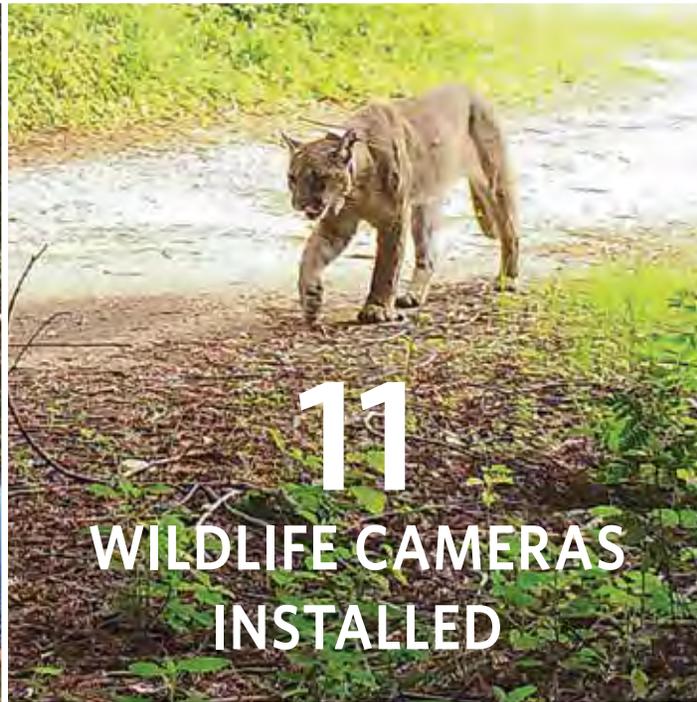


79,301
VISITORS TO
KIRKWOOD
ENTRANCE
CASTLE ROCK
STATE PARK

103
SEMPERVIRENS
VOLUNTEERS



11
WILDLIFE CAMERAS
INSTALLED



**52 TREES
AND GROVES
DEDICATED**



THANKS TO
YOUR
SUPPORT

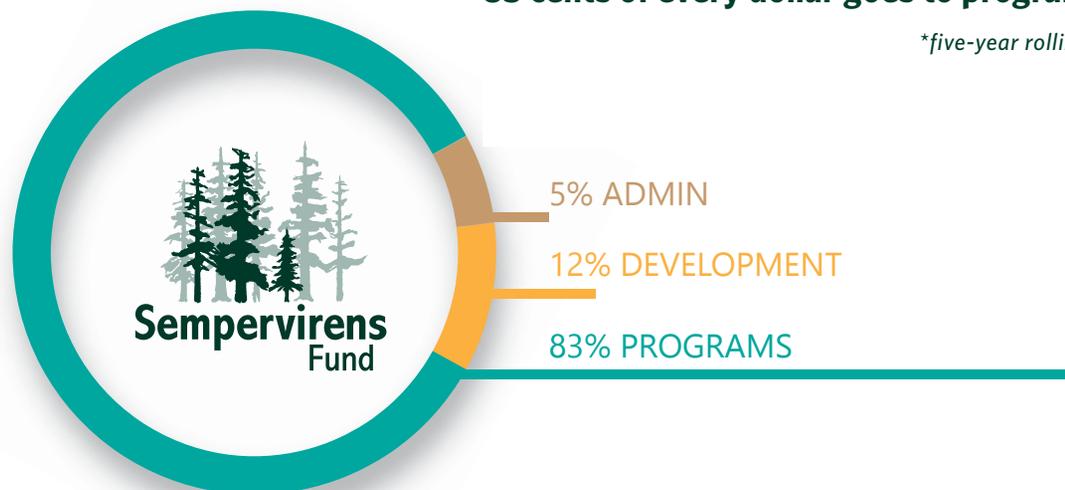


Financial Statement

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

**Your money goes far when you invest with us.
83 cents of every dollar goes to programs.***

**five-year rolling average*



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 83% of our budget over the last five years.









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419 South San Antonio Road, Ste. 211
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Filice Ranch. photo: Teddy Miller

*“Protecting more acres is key, and with
your support, we added 640 acres this year.”*

Sara Barth, Executive Director

