

Mountain Echo

THE NEWSLETTER OF SEMPERVIRENS FUND | SUMMER 2021



Restoring Habitat for Coho Salmon

You are ensuring that through careful restoration and stewardship, not only are our forests healthy, but our waterways are protected and species have the best chance to thrive.

Earlier this year we began work to remove a dam from Mill Creek, a key tributary in the San Vicente watershed. The dam has impeded coho salmon from reaching desperately needed spawning habitat for decades. Removing the dam will not only restore the creek flow, but also improve sediment conditions critical for spawning.

A restored creek is also essential to the health and resilience of the surrounding redwoods and other nearby and downstream habitats at San Vicente. Deconstruction will be completed before the end of the year.

Sempervirens Fund and its San Vicente partners are pursuing research projects to monitor and survey fish populations throughout the watershed, such as coho salmon, steelhead trout, and lamprey eels, including the use of environmental DNA techniques. Past restoration projects along Mill Creek, for example the introduction of large woody debris, have already reinvigorated steelhead populations, which were pulsing upstream to the dam in early spring.

Since 2011, Sempervirens Fund, Peninsula Open Space Trust, Save the Redwoods League, and Land Trust of Santa Cruz County have partnered to steward the property's old-growth redwoods and eight creeks, home to many regionally important species of wildlife and plants. While dams are rare in the Santa Cruz Mountains, the one on

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10 Reasons Redwoods Are Worth Protecting

Coast redwoods are magnificent. They provide clean air, homes to plants and wildlife, and inspiration for us all—but we must protect the remaining redwood forests before it's too late. Here are some of our favorite facts about redwoods.

Stand tallest. Coast redwood trees are the tallest trees on the planet. They can grow to 300 feet high or more. The tallest recorded redwood tree in the Santa Cruz Mountains is Big Basin Redwoods State Park's "Mother of the Forest" at 329 feet high, which survived fire yet again in 2020.

Older than flowers. Redwoods have been around for about 240 million years and in California for at least 20 million years.

Live for millennia. Officially, the oldest living coast redwood has been alive for at least 2,200 years, but foresters believe some coast redwoods may be much older.

Live in harmony. A redwood's shallow but widespread roots help them survive by intertwining with the roots of other trees around them and supporting—and talking to—each other by sharing nutrients.

Make rain. A redwood's leaves absorb moisture from fog, condense fog into drops that rain down to soak the soil around them, and condense moisture in the air into clouds that cool the forest.

Nurture life. Because redwoods grow large and old, their leaves collect with dust and water on branches to create mini-ecosystems. Hundreds of plants including ferns, moss, lichen, huckleberries, and even other full-sized trees have been found living in the canopies of redwoods.

Support wildlife. The redwood forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains are near the southern end of the largest temperate rainforest in the world and some species spend their whole lives in redwood canopies.

Heroes for climate. Studies show that coast redwoods capture more carbon dioxide (CO₂) from our cars, trucks and power plants than any other tree on Earth.

Live only here. Coast redwoods' natural habitat is on the Pacific Coast from Big Sur to southern Oregon. Coastal fog has supplied enough water to support the giants all year round for the last 20 million years.

Nearly gone. Only 5% of the original old-growth coast redwood forests that flourished on the Pacific Coast are left. You can help protect what remains and grow the old growth of the future.

Learn more about these and other redwood facts: sempervirens.org/redwood-facts

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Mill Creek was built early last century to support redwood logging. Its utility has long since expired, and removal is the best option for repairing the ecosystem.

We are grateful for your commitment to protecting and preserving San Vicente, the largest swath of privately protected redwoods in the region. To learn more about San Vicente Redwoods, visit sempervirens.org/san-vicente-redwoods

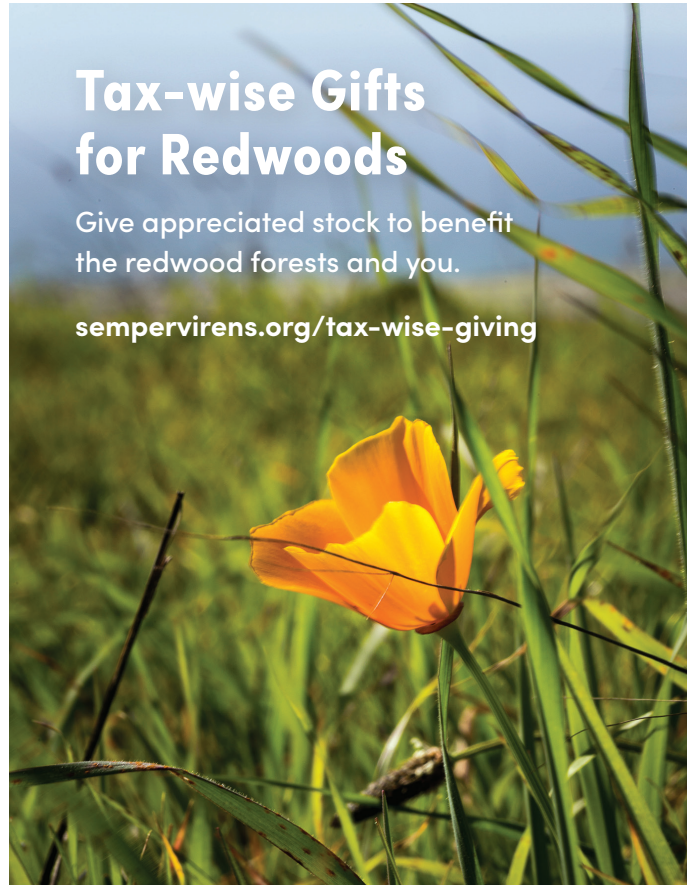
Land Trust Alliance Accreditation

The Land Trust Alliance recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. Sempervirens Fund is pleased to announce we are applying to renew our accreditation. A public comment period is now open. Learn more: sempervirens.org/lt

Tax-wise Gifts for Redwoods

Give appreciated stock to benefit the redwood forests and you.

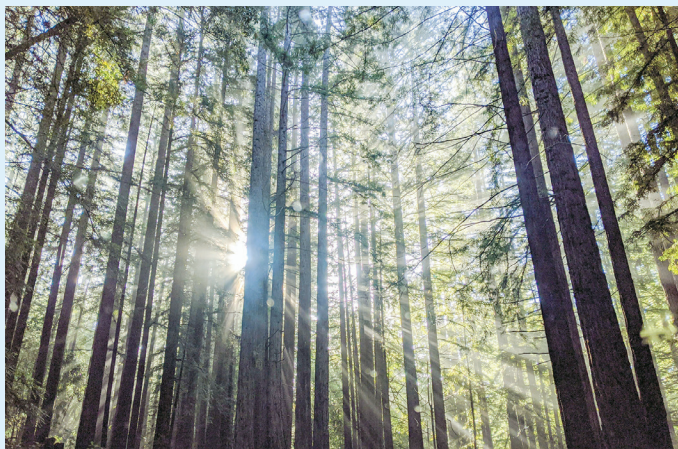
sempervirens.org/tax-wise-giving



Reimagining Big Basin

In April, Julie Cart wrote in Cal Matters: “In the annals of California history, no one has ever had to put a broken state park back together.”

And in the year since any of us stood in the cool, dappled shade of Big Basin’s towering and emerald canopies, a lot has happened, and



also, not much has changed. The forest is still recovering, showing both the deep scars of intense wildfire, and bursts of green among basal roots, fuzzing out along charcoal trunks, and reaching forth from canopy tops. Parks officials continue to remove dead and hazardous trees. Late this spring, work began to haul out the remnants of vehicles and buildings.

And planning began. This will be a big, slow-moving effort, befitting a park of this scale and magnitude. As of this newsletter’s printing, Big Basin remains closed, and opportunities for public engagement have not begun, but we have been in close contact with California State Parks, in Sacramento and in Santa Cruz, to ensure that when the moment comes, you will be invited to help shape Big Basin’s future.

You will be vital to helping us reimagine Big Basin for the next generations to enjoy and experience California’s oldest state park. Keep updated:

sempervirens.org/news



What to Watch and Read

Your vital support for the protection of redwoods is encouraging newsmakers to tell the essential stories of the magnificent forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Under the Redwoods

For the last year we have been pleased to bring you *Under the Redwoods*, a free monthly webinar series exploring the beauty, history, science, and benefits of our magnificent redwood forests. In June, we were thrilled to host Professor Suzanne Simard, author of *Finding the Mother Tree*, and discussed her pioneering research exploring how connections and communication between trees influence forest recovery. You can register for future webinars and watch past episodes here:

sempervirens.org/under-the-redwoods

OpenRoad with Doug McConnell

For nearly four decades, Doug McConnell has crafted the seminal stories of the Bay Area's conservation triumphs and challenges. We joined Doug and partners in June to discuss the dynamic land stewardship partnerships in the Santa Cruz Mountains. You can watch the episode at

sempervirens.org/open-road

Big Basin in the News

Big Basin's future is big news for you, for us, and for the world. As we look ahead to its future, read up on how California State Parks has helped its forests recover and planned for reimagining the park for generations to come. Read stories in Bay Nature magazine, the Wall Street Journal, and more:

sempervirens.org/in-the-news

Sign up for email news: **sempervirens.org/news**



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Everlasting Vistas

Great Views of the Santa Cruz Mountains

The Santa Cruz Mountains are a spectacular natural bounty of ridgelines, forests, sandstone cliffs, and sand dunes, overlooking far-off ocean horizons. And there's nothing quite like rounding a curve to see the expanse of all this bounty open up before you.

Here we send you off, to venture to the everlasting vistas that show off the magnificent views of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Ready to Explore?

Here are three of our favorite regional hikes with a view. Before you head out, some reminders:

- **Check in.** Visit park websites for the latest information on park and trail status—including any one-way use requirements for social distancing—facilities like restrooms, fountains, and parking availability before you go.
- **Recreate Responsibly.** Although COVID-19 restrictions vary, keep moving, keep your distance, and bring a mask.
- **Leave No Trace.** Take with you only memories, and pack out what you pack in.

Now, let's get you out on the trails.

Great Views of the Santa Cruz Mountains

Details on these hikes are available on our website at sempervirens.org/visit, with maps courtesy of AllTrails.



GOAT ROCK OVERLOOK, EMILY SMITH OBSERVATION POINT, AND SARATOGA GAP TRAIL

Castle Rock State Park

Elevation gain: 892 ft.

Hike rating: moderate

This 4.1-mile loop is a popular way to check out one of the region's most intriguing parks and sweeping views.



QUAIL HOLLOW SUNSET TRAIL

Quail Hollow Ranch County Park

Elevation gain: 564 ft.

Hike rating: moderate

A brisk 2.8-mile loop passing through a rich array of habitats and with iconic scenic views.



HENRY COWELL OBSERVATION DECK LOOP

Henry Cowell State Park

Elevation gain: 698 ft.

Hike rating: moderate

Our longest loop trail at 5.3 miles, this is a redwood-lover's paradise, and from the top the ridges seem to ripple out forever.

We believe redwood forests should be enjoyed by everyone, and whether you like to climb to the high mountain ridges, explore the deep river basins, or simply tread (lightly) on the soft needles that carpet the forest floor, there's an experience for you in the Santa Cruz Mountains. **Thank you for your support for protecting redwoods!**

Photos: Russell Feretti-Hoyle, David Royal, Randy Lloyd, Frank Fujimoto.

