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## **Sempervirens Fund Announces Plan to Preserve The Y of San Francisco's Camp Jones Gulch and Redwood Forests in Santa Cruz Mountains**

*Partnership between Sempervirens Fund and The Y of San Francisco will protect some of the region's oldest redwood forests while providing funds to Camp Jones Gulch, promising continued outdoor education for future generations of San Mateo County public school students*

**San Mateo, Calif. (May 18, 2022)** — [Sempervirens Fund](#) today announced a partnership with The [Y of San Francisco](#) to preserve the 928-acre property that [Camp Jones Gulch](#) has occupied for more than 80 years in La Honda, CA, including significant redwood forests. Sempervirens Fund has entered into a contract to purchase a conservation easement from The Y, which has owned the land since the 1930s, for more than \$9.625 million, enabling the state's oldest land trust to permanently protect land that is home to one of the largest unprotected stands of old-growth redwoods in the Santa Cruz mountains.

“This invaluable stretch of redwood forest is home to notable groves of trees like the ‘Valley of the Giants’ and a cherished nature camp accessible to all of the region’s youth and families,” said Sara Barth, Executive Director of Sempervirens Fund. “This conservation easement means the forests at Camp Jones Gulch and its surroundings will be permanently protected from development, commercial logging, and other forms of resource extraction and cared for in partnership with The Y.”

The sale of the easement will enable The Y to complete infrastructure upgrades and repairs to the camp. In addition to an agreement to buy the conservation easement, which will forever protect natural resources associated with the property while keeping it in private ownership, Sempervirens Fund will create a \$422,000 stewardship fund to support ecological restoration work on the property and implement stewardship programs to improve the health and resilience of the forest habitats.

“It is a crucial part of our mission to connect youth to nature, and we are excited to partner with Sempervirens Fund to preserve this incredible environment for the future. Camp Jones Gulch is a vital part of our history, and The Y has been enriching children’s lives there for more than 80 years,” said Jamie Bruning-Miles, President and CEO of the YMCA of San Francisco. “The easement will also secure funding for the camp to sustain its outdoor educational programming and expand its facilities so the next generation of campers can discover the wonders of nature.”

Since 1968, it has been a rite of passage for fifth and sixth grade students in [San Mateo County](#), to experience a week at Camp Jones Gulch, giving them an opportunity to explore nature among the region’s ancient redwoods. A recent survey of students shows a high percentage find the experience rewarding, as they learn to be more independent, discover the wonders of science and nature, and gain a deeper understanding about conserving natural resources and climate resiliency

“The County Board of Education and I are thrilled with this partnership that further enhances Camp Jones Gulch and ensures generations of San Mateo County students continue to benefit from immersive outdoor learning opportunities,” said Nancy Magee, San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools. “The Camp Jones Gulch experience is a true treasure for students and helps them build their capacity for a climate ready future.”

The forests on the Camp Jones Gulch property were heavily harvested in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and by 1926, just two tracts of old-growth redwoods remained. Eventually, it was owned by Sally M. Black who sold it to the YMCA in 1934. At the time, only boys were allowed at YMCA camps. Black sold the property with the stipulation that it be open to girls as well, making Camp Jones Gulch the first YMCA camp in the country built with inclusion in mind.

Pescadero Creek County Park and Sam McDonald County Park border Camp Jones Gulch, which is adjacent to nearly 7,000 acres of open space, connecting to over 10,000 acres and the largest patch of intact habitat in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The property includes 39 acres of rare old growth redwood forest, 668 acres of young growth redwood, Douglas fir, and hardwood forests, mature oak woodlands, and other riparian woodlands.

Camp Jones Gulch is crossed by Jones Gulch and McCormick Creeks, and is within the Pescadero watershed, important for endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead trout. Special status species known to occur on site include the marbled murrelet, San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat, and California red-legged frog. Similar habitat in the region is known to host an additional 21 identified rare animals. Additional species expected to benefit from this project include the western pond turtle, San Francisco Garter snake, loggerhead shrike, northern harrier, white-tailed kite, olive-sided

flycatcher, several bat species including Townsend's big-eared bat, hoary bat, and pallid bat.

"Adding conservation protections to privately owned redwood forests is essential to creating a thriving regional ecosystem and this land is home to some of the oldest and most notable trees in the entire Santa Cruz mountains," said Laura McLendon, Sempervirens Fund's Director of Conservation. "Some of these trees are well over 500 years old and this easement will protect them forever. It is a conservation gem."

A conservation easement will launch a partnership between Sempervirens Fund and The Y to ensure perpetual monitoring and implementation of a Stewardship Plan at Camp Jones Gulch to enhance and restore forest health, reduce the threat of wildfire, educate the environmental stewards of the future, and promote climate resiliency across multiple wildlife habitats. The partners will also consult with the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District, the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, and Muwekma Tribal Band.

"It is exciting to not only have the rare opportunity to care for significant old-growth and second generation redwoods, but to also work with a dynamic partner in The Y. The kids that attend this camp will become the leaders of the future who ensure that special forests like these endure," added Barth. "As we face down the threats of climate change, creative partnerships like this are going to be necessary."

Funding for the \$10 million project will include funds from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation (\$2.4 million), Sempervirens Fund donors (\$2.25 million, including \$1 million from the Midgley Foundation), the Wildlife Conservation Board (\$2 million, approved in February 2022), Peninsula Open Space Trust (\$2 million), and the California Coastal Conservancy (\$950,000). The deal is expected to be completed before the end of 2022.

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### **About Sempervirens Fund**

California's first land trust, Sempervirens Fund protects and permanently preserves redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) forests, wildlife habitat, watersheds, and other important natural and scenic features of the Santa Cruz mountains and encourages public appreciation and enjoyment of this environment. [Sempervirens.org](https://www.sempervirens.org)