

IMPACT REPORT 2021



Sempervirens
Fund





To our coast redwood supporters,

The past year has included significant change and tremendous uncertainty, in the Santa Cruz mountains and beyond. At times like these, I find comfort and a sense of rejuvenation among the coast redwoods.

I am particularly reassured by growing evidence that these forests are recovering from the 2020 CZU wildfire. It is a testament to how tough and adaptable they are. My optimism is tempered by the ongoing challenges they face from the lingering effects of this wildfire, the likelihood of future fires, several years of extreme drought, and additional impacts of climate change.

Our job at Sempervirens Fund is to do everything in our power to give these forests the best chance possible to thrive for the next 1,000 years. We do that by protecting as many unprotected forests as we can and ensuring that they are healthy, which will support their ability to withstand current and future threats. So, we are actively evaluating the health of these forests, applying the most recent research, and adopting the best land management practices to care for these forests today and for many generations to come.

Your support for these forests is the reason we effectively steward these forests in the Santa Cruz mountains and seize important opportunities to secure greater protection for more forests in the region.

In 2021 we removed a dam to restore salmon-bearing streams, helped thousands of acres of forests begin to recover from fire, negotiated the purchase of hundreds of acres of forests, including the new Gateway to Big Basin State Park, and helped launch the planning effort that will determine the future for Big Basin.

We are grateful for your support in this crucial moment for redwoods, and we are looking forward to a milestone year for our forests in 2022.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Barth".

Sara Barth, Executive Director



To our Sempervirens Fund community,

For 122 years, the Sempervirens Fund community has consistently demonstrated that when we come together, we can protect and permanently preserve coast redwoods in the Santa Cruz mountains. Timber harvesting and development still threaten redwoods, while fire and drought, accelerated by climate change, endanger our forest habitats. Purchasing land remains critical, and elevating stewardship of the forests is clearly just as important.

Thanks to you, Sempervirens Fund is meeting this moment. We are focusing on accelerating the pace of purchasing land. The protection of the Gateway to Big Basin in early 2022 was the first of many projects planned in the year ahead. As you will learn about soon, we are working to protect nearly 1,000 acres of ancient redwoods, which would connect protected lands and provide thousands of youth with outdoor education in the redwoods each year.

Along with Reimagining Big Basin, public trails at San Vicente Redwoods and Cotoni-Coast Dairies, and the hopeful return of salmon to Mill Creek following removal of a dam, it is an exhilarating time for conservation and public access in the Santa Cruz mountains.

And I am proud to tell you that Sempervirens Fund is deepening the organization's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion—for a growing staff and board, with our partners, and for safer and more welcoming experiences in the forests we cherish. This includes strengthening the Amah Mutsun and Muwekma Ohlone tribes' connections to their ancestral lands.

And as you know, and show with your generous support, restoring the forests we protect is a vital role for the organization, especially now. The Sempervirens Fund team you support has grown in skill, experience, and staff to shepherd in a new era of active forest management and partnership in the region. We could not be meeting this moment with such strength and success without you.

With appreciation,

Pam Koch, Board President



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Executive Director	2
Letter from Pam Koch	3
Forever Protected: The Gateway to Big Basin	4
A Dam Removed	6
Bringing Our Forests Back from the Brink	8
Your Impact	10
Reclaiming Indigenous History	12
Thank You, Donors	14
Financials	16
Board of Directors	19

Forever Protected: The Gateway to Big Basin

The Gateway to Big Basin

Along California Highway 236, as you enter the final stretch before Big Basin Redwoods State Park emerges into view, you wind through redwoods and oaks that have stood for much of the last century. Long before 236 carved its way through this 153-acre property, it had been mostly cut clear of redwoods at the turn of the previous century. Now, thriving stands of second-generation redwoods, Douglas fir, oaks, and madrones have created a new forest, harboring headwaters for the Boulder Creek Watershed and habitat for wildlife.

Over the last several decades the land also harbored something less desirable: junk, cars, and debris. Since cleaned, and with a thorough assessment of good ecological health, the property endured more challenges in 2020. It was here, on

the northeastern edge of the CZU fire, that the blaze died out in the forest's understory, before reaching nearby Boulder Creek.

From clear-cutting, a junkyard, and fire, a forest revived, survived, and thrives. And in a matter of months, we were able to craft a permanent conservation legacy for the Gateway to Big Basin. Your incredible outpouring of support ensured that earlier this year we were able to purchase this remarkable and essential forest. And in time, we are hopeful it will become part of Big Basin's permanent future too.

A Bright Future

Because you are there for us and for redwoods, we are looking forward to a very promising year of conservation in the Santa Cruz mountains. We are negotiating a conservation easement to protect one of the

largest unprotected stands of old-growth redwoods in the region and are working with many landowners who believe that their properties deserve to be conserved as redwood forests for generations to come. We agree.

We are proud to work with willing landowners who see the legacy of their lands can live on for generations in the hands of conservation stewards. Oftentimes, conservation projects take years to come together. In 2021, and thanks to your support, we were able to quickly respond to a landowner's wish to ensure his forests would be protected, now, forever, and for all.

Learn more about the Gateway and all the forests we have protected over more than a century in the Santa Cruz mountains: sempervirens.org/redwood-forests

"We are fortunate to live where we have these opportunities to save redwoods and save open space. We've driven through the Gateway [to Big Basin] a million times, and after you get through Boulder Creek, it's always like: Whoa! The redwoods! It is important to provide opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors—this is a beautiful area we live in. This is also home. Not just for us, but for the trees and everything that lives in there. We love finding banana slugs, mushrooms, and moss when we hike. It's sad so much has been damaged, so it means a lot to do a little part to help protect it."

—Eileen and Gary Ruppel, Sempervirens Fund donors





DAM AT MILL CREEK



DAM REMOVAL



MILL CREEK TODAY

A Dam Removed

More than a decade ago, Sempervirens Fund joined with a consortium of land trusts to purchase San Vicente Redwoods in the heart of the Santa Cruz mountains. Over its more than 8,500 acres, its forests and watersheds had endured a century of quarrying, clear-cutting, and fire. The goal then, as it remains today, has been to bring every acre of the property back to its most optimal natural conditions, to replenish the redwood forests that once thrived here, and to open it up to the public to enjoy. With your enduring support over these years, we are closer than ever before, and made gains in 2021 that will last generations.

The Dam at Mill Creek

For more than a century, a defunct dam blocked the upper reaches of Mill Creek from its natural pairing with San Vicente Creek and the watershed that drains through Cotoni-Coast Dairies and to the

Pacific. The dam also obstructed critical pathways for Coho salmon seeking suitable spawning habitat at the southern end of their range.

But out of the ashes of a terrifying and tragic fire came an opportunity. Infrastructure across the top of the dam, which supplied the town of Davenport with backup drinking water, burned up in the CZU fire. With new pipes laid away from the dam wall, we had the opportunity we had long dreamed of: bringing down the dam.

Thanks to your support, and with generous funding from Resources Legacy Fund and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, we were able to assemble experts, engineers, biologists, and partners to remove the dam, once and for all. Now gone, and with a remarkable flush of winter storms carving new creek beds where once sediment was

trapped for a century, the natural flow is restored. And the sediment will mobilize into the system downstream, bringing essential resources for Coho salmon to spawn again here.

A Decade in the Making

Although the dam came down quickly, the work that led to this moment had slowly and meticulously been crafted for the past decade. Sempervirens Fund and partners have, piece by piece, restored every stretch of creek beds and floodplains from Mill Creek to San Vicente Creek to prepare downstream conditions to receive its bounty. Without this vision, and your support, we would not be celebrating this success today.

Learn more about how removing the dam is among the final pieces of the puzzle to restore a watershed:

sempervirens.org/restoring-a-watershed

“Entering a redwood grove is akin to entering a holy place. The majesty of the trees is an overpowering feeling of sacredness. You have escaped the ordinary day-to-day life and passed into heaven. The atmosphere is wonderfully serene. I love the silence of the forest: it is quiet, and even city sounds are hushed to a low thrum. On a hot day there is nothing more soothing than a redwood forest as the temperature is usually at least ten degrees cooler. Redwood forests are the closest thing to a religious experience for me.” –Mary Melandry, Sempervirens Fund monthly donor

Bringing Our Forests Back from the Brink



Most of our history we have worked to ensure your support helps forests thrive for the next century. In 2021, with forests still smoldering from wildfires, your emergency funding support made it possible to show up for forests in crisis and reset our path to a healthy and resilient future.

With your support we were on the ground, in the forests, organizing efforts to restore nearly 30,000 acres of land. We also helped launch and took up a leadership role with the future of Big Basin Redwoods State Park, with Executive Director Sara Barth serving

on the advisory committee for Reimagining Big Basin. And our conservation team is supplying data and research to help California State Parks take a fresh look at land management and acquisition opportunities.

Big Basin Recovery Fund

The hardest-hit forests were those in iconic Big Basin Redwoods State Park. Working together with California State Parks we established an emergency fund, which augmented disaster relief funding to ensure park district teams could respond to the crisis. Set to reopen with limited forest and trail access in summer 2022, the future of the beloved Big Basin is much brighter and

more assured thanks to your outpouring of support. Below are some of the key ways your support made a difference for more than 18,000 acres of forests at Big Basin.

Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship

From San Vicente Redwoods to properties ringing Big Basin and Butano State Parks, you entrust us to care for more than 11,000 acres of forests in the Santa Cruz mountains. Our expert stewardship staff made significant progress in 2021 to improve the health and resiliency of forest ecosystems, waterways, and wildlife habitats throughout the region. Emergency funding helped ensure we chronicled and evaluated the ecological impacts of wildfire, replaced

AMOUNT RAISED: \$627,332 | KEY OUTCOMES:

- Hazard tree removal
- Preparation for winter storms
- Removal of hazardous debris
- Construction of new infrastructure
- Launch of Reimagining Big Basin
- Installation of water tanks
- 15 old-growth redwood trees saved from the chainsaw
- Relocation of picnic tables to other open parks

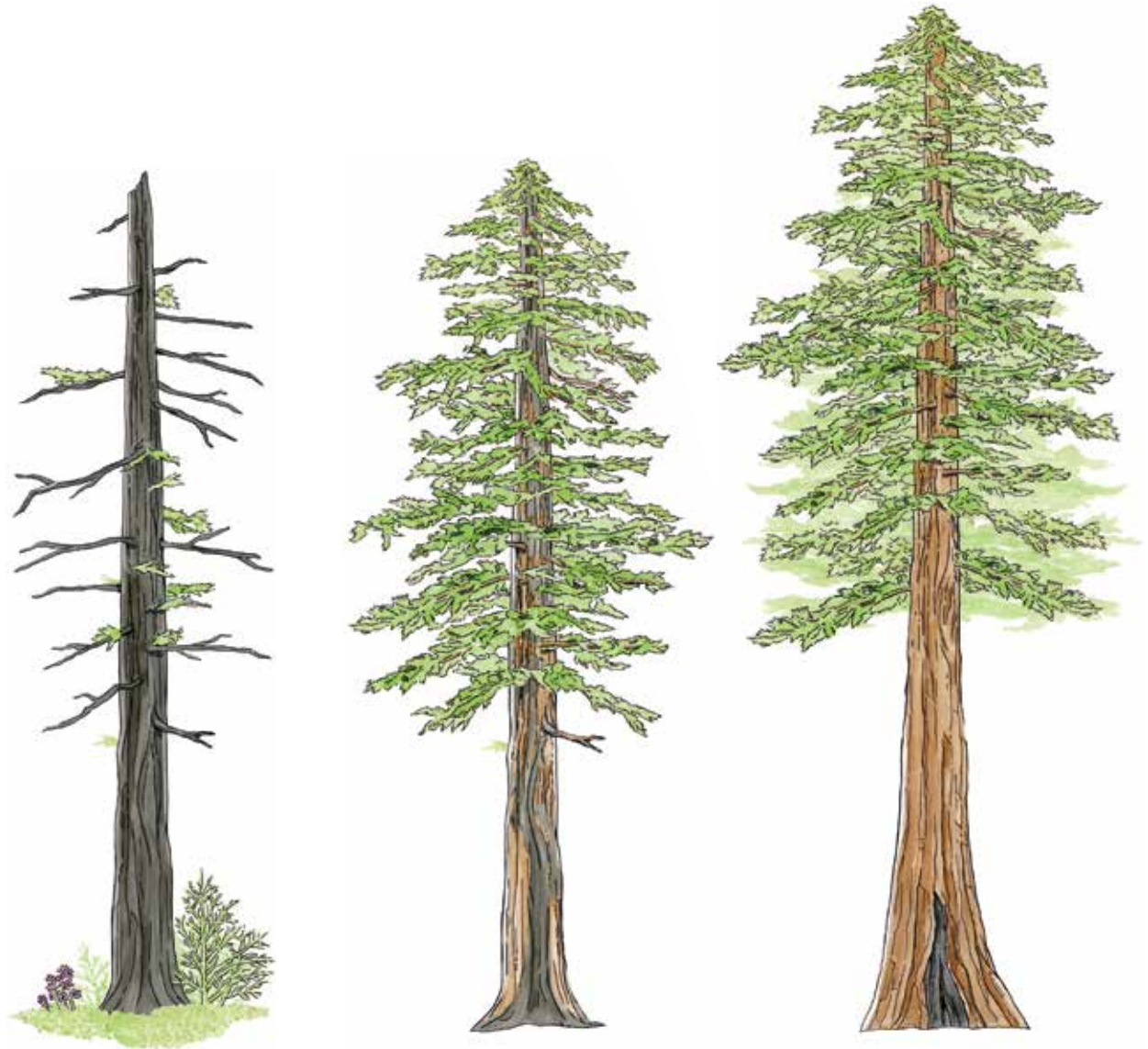
or removed damaged infrastructure, pinpointed and removed non-native vegetation, removed hazardous and dead trees, and worked with partners to establish new and improved fire breaks and plan for future prescribed burning to reduce fuel load.

Nature Needs Time to Heal

In 2020, fire transformed thousands of acres of redwoods in a matter of hours. Its effects will linger for hundreds of years. The forest is expected to rebound, eventually, more or less—but when? How long until the trees look, feel, sound, and smell like the magical forest we remember?

As we once again set our sights on the centuries to come, we have some answers. Essentially, in 20 years, redwood tree trunks will be about half red again. In 40 years, just a few scarred furrows will remain. We invite you to learn more about when redwoods will be red again and to continue supporting efforts for redwoods recovery in the Santa Cruz mountains:

sempervirens.org/redwoods-recovery



6 MONTHS

Within half-a-year, the understory will spring to life, with wildflowers and sorrel. Banana slugs and salamanders may return.

20 YEARS

After twenty years, the black bark is finally being replaced with eponymous red bark and new trunk growth.

200 YEARS

By 200 years, redwoods will reform their mature, complex, big-branch canopies. These are especially critical for marbled murrelets (shown left).

YOUR IMPACT



TREES PLANTED
5,500

**POST-FIRE
BOTANICAL
SURVEYS**

20



**ROAD
REALIGNMENT**

1



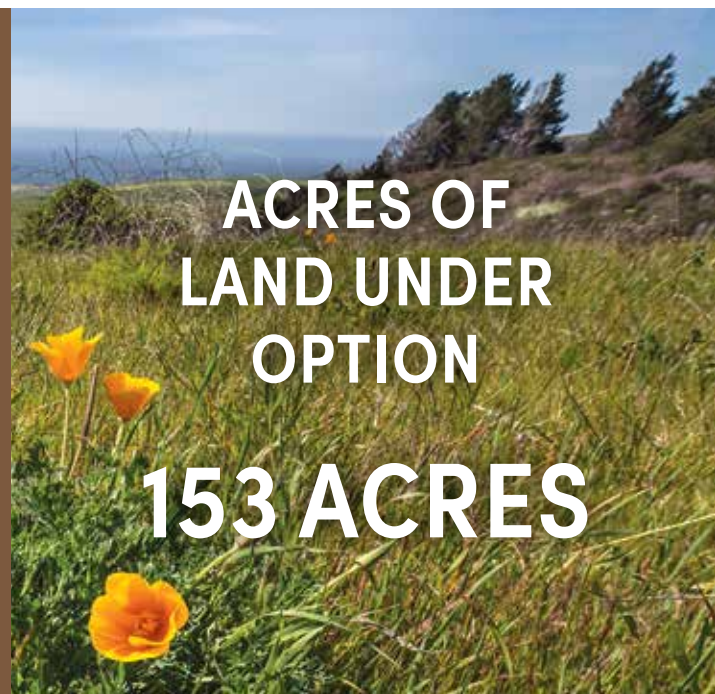
INVASIVE
PLANTS
MANAGED

50 ACRES



DEBRIS
FROM FIRE
REMOVED

498 TONS



ACRES OF
LAND UNDER
OPTION

153 ACRES



RESEARCH
PROJECTS INITIATED
OR ONGOING

18



DAMS
REMOVED

1

Reclaiming Indigenous History

Almost ten years ago, we were privileged to serve as fiscal sponsors to help the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band launch the Amah Mutsun Land Trust (AMLT). A decade later, and thanks to your support, their thriving land trust is an active conservation partner, helping us improve our approaches to active and adaptive land management, while they reclaim their ancestral history and traditional practices.

Historical Ecology

The Amah Mutsun Land Trust's Native Stewardship Corps brings the Mutsun people back to their tribal homelands to resume the indigenous stewardship work of their ancestors, ensuring that the traditional ecological knowledge of the Mutsun people is not lost to history. One approach to reclaiming this history is to investigate the historical ecology of landscapes.

Working with the Department of Anthropology and Department of Environmental Science and Policy Management at UC Berkeley, AMLT stewards are adapting archaeological methods to survey lands at San Vicente Redwoods and Cotoni-Coast Dairies to chronicle natural and cultural resources.

Together we learn from these findings and adjust our stewardship practices and goals.

In some cases we are learning more about how and when ancestral Awaswas-speaking Ohlone tribes, like the Amah Mutsun, cared for and cultivated certain plant communities, giving us precise guidance on how to adapt our own practices, in redwoods, among creeks, or in coastal prairie habitats. For example, we have integrated findings to adjust boundaries and goals for conservation projects throughout San Vicente Redwoods to protect and support ongoing archaeological efforts. We have also improved our approach to cultural and prescribed burning to cultivate healthy stands of hazelnut.

Research

Understanding waterway health is also key to using current conditions to look back in time at traditional practices. In restoring San Vicente watershed and removing the Mill Creek dam, AMLT stewards are partnering with the UCLA Center for Diverse Leadership in Science and American Indian Studies Center to examine environmental DNA markers for key species, especially Coho salmon, an essential for the Mutsun people.

Collecting, sampling, and analyzing eDNA throughout the San Vicente watershed, from above the recently removed dam, all the way to the Pacific, helps us understand where salmon and other species may have been, and what changes the dam's removal is bringing to the presence of salmon throughout the system. This approach is much more precise than observation and counting of fish species.

Combined, historical ecology, research, and traditional practices such as cultural burning support forest resilience and help the Amah Mutsun reclaim their history and improve our stewardship practices throughout San Vicente Redwoods and the Santa Cruz mountains.

Learn more about the impact of this partnership on restoration of San Vicente watershed:

sempervirens.org/reclaiming-history

Right: Stewards from the Amah Mutsun Land Trust collect eDNA samples in the San Vicente watershed.



Thank You, Donors

Every year, trees grow taller and wider, adding a new ring of growth. Your protection of these magnificent redwood trees allows them to add rings, year after year, for generations to come. We are grateful to each and every one of you—first-time, monthly, longtime, and legacy donors, foundations, and corporations—who supported us in 2021. Thank you!



5+ DECADES 37 DONORS (1969–1980)

4 DECADES 1052 DONORS (1981–1990)

3 DECADES 1190 DONORS (1991–2000)

2 DECADES 1264 DONORS (2001–2010)

1 DECADE 3193 DONORS (2011–2020)

NEWEST RING 3046 DONORS (2021)



"I chose to work with Sempervirens Fund because I have always had a love of nature and I especially enjoy hiking in the forest. Each time I go hiking under a canopy of tall trees, I feel like a guest who is fortunate enough to witness the tranquility of life in these amazing places and I too gain a sense of calm and peace. As I prepare for college, I am also passionate about advocating for the environment and working to help fight climate change. My love of nature and my passion for environmental advocacy is what drew me to Sempervirens Fund, and I really feel connected to the mission of protecting forests and preserving redwoods."

–Taylor Elich, Sempervirens Fund volunteer



"As a donor and on behalf of Sheppard Mullin's pro bono team, we are honored to assist the talented and dedicated Sempervirens staff in permanently protecting the redwood forests that are so important to the health of our world. Our pro bono services are a small token of our gratitude for all you, and the Sempervirens community of donors, do."

–Joan Story, Sempervirens Fund pro bono counsel and donor



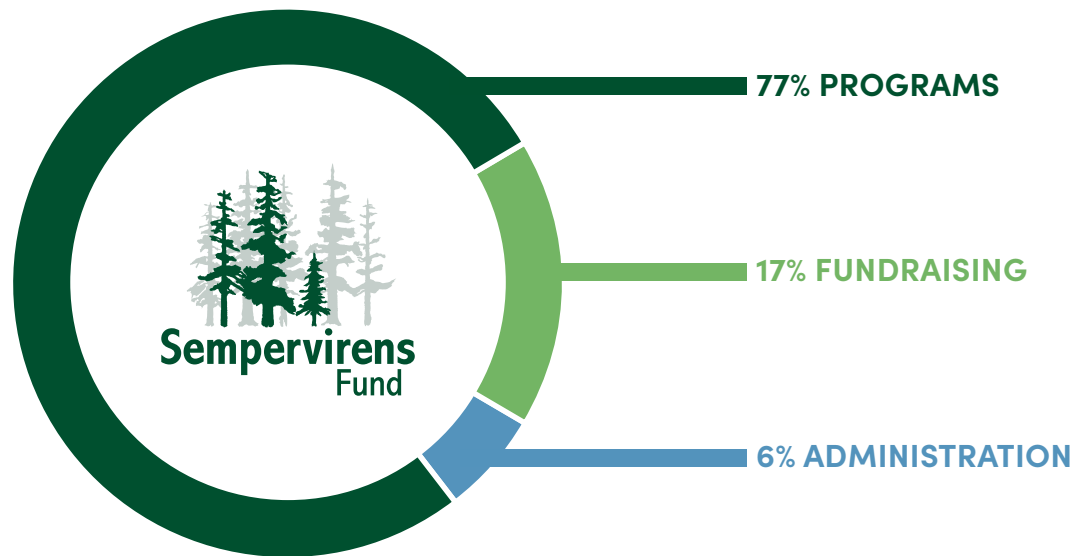
IN MEMORIAM

"I've been a longtime supporter, since 1985, impressed with the work Sempervirens Fund was doing at that time and still today, preserving more land for future generations. If we don't do it now it will never be done. We are running out of land and open space and if we want to preserve it, we better do it now." –Al Lisin, Sempervirens Fund volunteer and donor

Make a gift in honor of Al Lisin: sempervirens.org/al-lisin

Financial Statement

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



As a land trust, it is difficult to accurately measure our program efficiency by looking at a single year. Land transactions can take more than five years to finalize, resulting in a significant difference in program expenses from year to year. We, along with many local land trusts, believe a five-year rolling average is the most meaningful way to look at our financial performance.









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