

FAQ – Sempervirens Fund Board of Directors

1. What is Sempervirens Fund?

Sempervirens Fund is California's first land trust and the only organization dedicated exclusively to protecting the redwood forests of the Santa Cruz mountains.

Our Mission:

Sempervirens Fund's mission is to protect and permanently preserve redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) forests, wildlife habitat, watersheds, and other important natural and scenic features of California's Santa Cruz mountains, and to encourage public appreciation and enjoyment of this environment.

Our Vision:

We believe wild and thriving redwood forests can flourish again from Silicon Valley to the Pacific Ocean. With your help, we can establish a large, interconnected, and protected network of healthy trees and streams, stretching across public and private lands.

2. What are Sempervirens Fund's sources of revenue?

Sempervirens Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We are primarily supported by gifts from individuals, government grants, foundation and corporate support, and in-kind donations. When possible, we sell conserved land to California State Parks in order to add that land to an existing State Park, such as Big Basin Redwoods.

3. Where is Sempervirens Fund located and in which geographic region do we work?

The Sempervirens Fund office is located at 800 W. El Camino Real, Suite 180, Mountain View, CA 94040. Sempervirens Fund works to protect land throughout the Santa Cruz mountains of California. The spectacular and iconic Santa Cruz mountains stretch from Montara Mountain to the Sierra Azul range, and from skyline ridges to the sea. The region's 1,025 square miles, or 656,000 acres, of redwood forest and watersheds is approximately 21 times the size of San Francisco and nearly as large as Yosemite National Park.

4. What is Sempervirens Fund's organizational profile?

- a. 14,000+ active donors
- b. Annual operating budget of nearly \$7 million
- c. 12 Board Members (and growing!)
- d. 4 Board Committees: Executive, Development, Audit, and Land & Stewardship
- e. 22 Staff (and growing!)

5. What is the role of the Sempervirens Fund Board?

Sempervirens staff are responsible for the organization's day-to-day operations and mission delivery. The role of the Sempervirens' Board, a group of volunteer leaders, is to provide governing oversight. More specifically, the Board is responsible for:

- Advising on short and long-range strategy to ensure the organization successfully accomplishes its mission.
- Acting as ambassadors for redwoods and the organization in their community.

- Connecting the organization to their networks of family, friends, colleagues, and other members of their community.
- Monitoring implementation of strategies and programs to ensure ongoing delivery of goals.
- Ensuring financial stability, solvency, and fiscal health by approving the organization’s annual budget and monitoring its financial performance.
- Securing adequate financial resources by partnering with staff to develop and implement fundraising strategies.
- Providing perspectives, historic and current context, and expertise as the organization evaluates new challenges and opportunities.
- Overseeing the Executive Director.
- Recruiting, selecting, and monitoring the performance of the Board members and Board leaders.

Each individual Board member brings a unique set of skills, life experiences, and technical expertise to their role. We seek to have a diversity of perspectives, capacities, identities, and expertise represented on our Board. Individual Board members frequently provide advice and input that is based on their area of experience or expertise. However, the Sempervirens Fund Board also functions cohesively and collaboratively. There is no “one size fits all” approach to the way individuals serve on the Sempervirens Fund Board.

6. What is required of a Sempervirens Fund Board member?

Our Board Members commit to:

- Volunteering their time and expertise, and connecting their networks, for the shared goal of protecting redwood forest habitat.
- Actively participating in Board meetings and retreats.
- Serving on at least one Board committee.
- Supporting the organization with a direct financial contribution and by helping with fundraising efforts.
- Learning from and working with other Board members and Sempervirens Fund staff. Bringing an open mind.
- Helping recruit new Board and committee members.
- Keeping abreast of major issues that affect Sempervirens Fund’s mission, vision, and strategic plan.
- Complying with all applicable organizational policies including Sempervirens Fund’s Bylaws, Conflict of Interest Policy, and Board Governance/Operations policies.

7. How much time will I spend serving on the Sempervirens Fund Board in a year?

The Sempervirens Fund Board meets 4 times a year. Meetings are held in-person, but with an option to attend virtually. The meetings are typically held from 12-2pm on the second Wednesday of the month in March, June, September, and December. The Board also typically has a full-day retreat once per year. As noted above, each Board member also serves on at least one committee. Depending on the committee, this amounts to an additional 4-10 meetings per year.

Board members can expect to spend approximately 2-3 additional hours per month preparing for Board meetings, advising staff, and supporting the organization’s advocacy and fundraising efforts. Lastly, Board members are invited to optional events throughout the year including site visits to properties being considered for protection, hikes, educational opportunities, fundraising events, and celebrations.

Our volunteer Board—and the time and leadership each Board member dedicates to protecting redwood forest habitat in the Santa Cruz mountains—is essential to the organization’s success.

8. Are there monetary requirements of Board members?

As a non-profit land trust, all Board members are asked to make a meaningful financial contribution to the organization. The organization often reports to philanthropic foundations and donors on the percentage of Board members who support the organization financially, so 100% participation is important. As a leader on the Board, we hope that Sempervirens Fund is one of the top three charities you support. The same donation amount is not requested of everyone, since a meaningful contribution will be different for each Board member. Board members are expected to cover their own expenses to attend meetings, retreats, and other organizational functions. Please let us know if such expenses will cause a financial burden.

9. Do I have to live near the Santa Cruz mountains to be a Board member?

We do not have a residency requirement. As a regional land conservation organization, we ask that anyone who joins the Board has a connection to and passion for the redwood forests of the Santa Cruz mountains.

Currently, our Board members live throughout California's Bay Area with many living in the Santa Cruz or Silicon Valley areas. Our meetings are generally held in one of those locations or in the Santa Cruz mountains. Since all Board meetings have an option to attend virtually, it would be possible to serve on the Board even if you are outside of the region. We ask, however, that Board members attend at least one event in person each year to strengthen the camaraderie and connection with Board colleagues and staff.

10. What are the benefits of becoming a Sempervirens Fund Board member?

Becoming a member of the Sempervirens Fund Board is an opportunity for leadership within a dynamic and innovative organization. With climate change affecting the redwood forests of the Santa Cruz mountains, becoming a Sempervirens Board member will allow you to have a direct impact on the resiliency of the region.

As a Board member, you will receive early information about Sempervirens Fund's land acquisition and stewardship work, you will have the opportunity to visit redwood properties not open to the public, you will join a network of passionate and effective conservation leaders, and most importantly, you can feel good knowing you are helping make the world a better place.

Our Board members find value in:

- Visiting places protected by the organization, knowing they were a part of that success
- Working with partners for the betterment of the region and beyond
- Navigating challenges together
- Contributing to something that has a long track record of success and that provides permanent protection to irreplaceable forest resources
- Serving on a solution-oriented Board to strengthen the organization

11. Who is the main staff contact for this Board role?

Sara Barth, Executive Director, and Holly Grench, Executive Coordinator, are the staff contacts for the Sempervirens Fund Board of Directors. Sara can be reached via email at sbarth@sempervirens.org and Holly can be reached at hgrench@sempervirens.org.