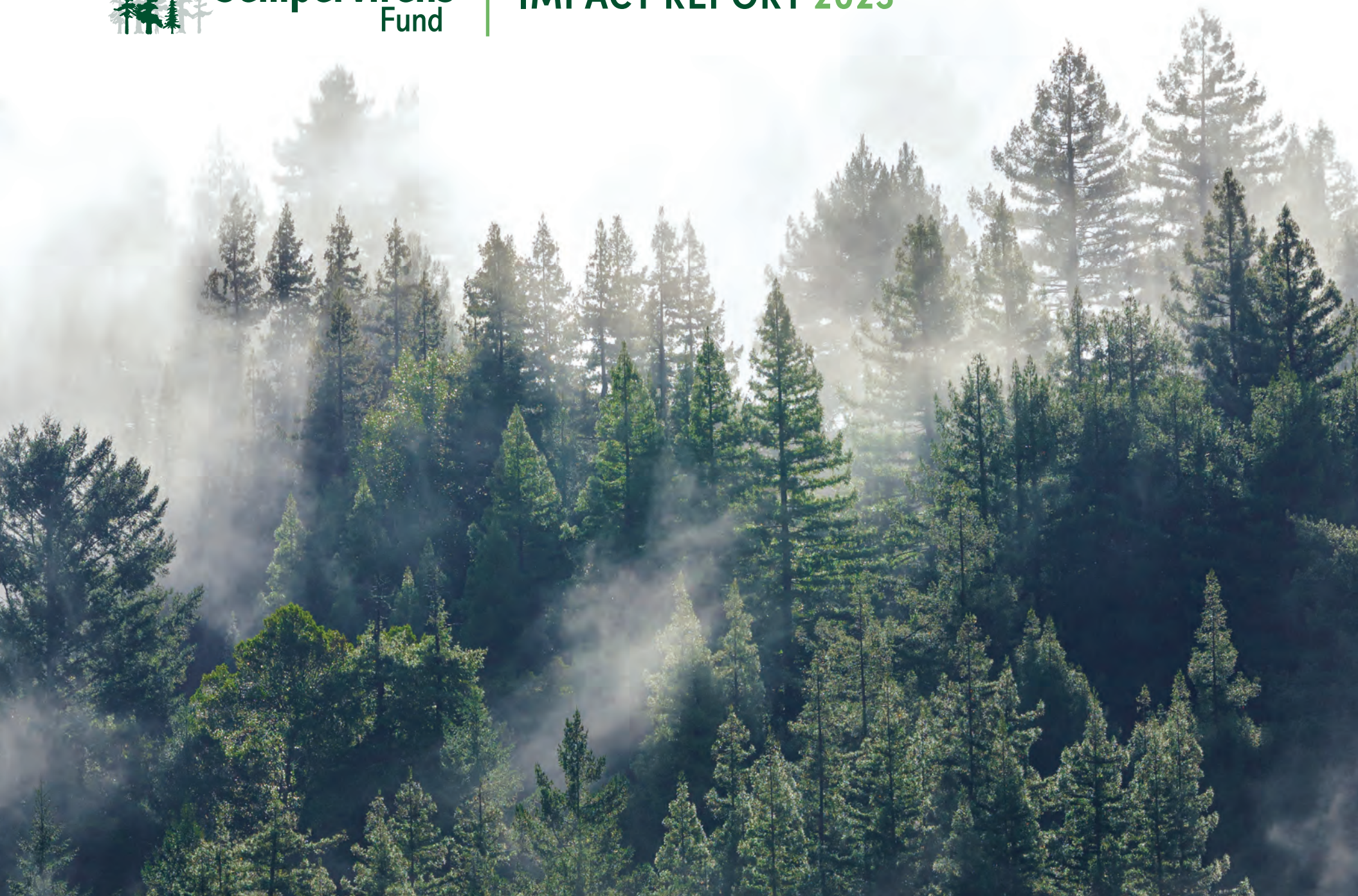




Sempervirens
Fund

IMPACT REPORT 2023





To our coast redwoods community,

With our organization's 125th anniversary a year away, we are deeply considering what our legacy has been and what it will be. Our commitment to enduring redwood forests remains fundamental and how we get there has changed dramatically. Both are only possible because of you and your passion for redwoods conservation.

The extreme weather of the past decade—and the mismanagement of forests for more than a century—have stressed our region's natural systems, including the mighty and seemingly invincible coast redwoods. Our 2023 climate action plan (page 8) spells out the risk: the Santa Cruz mountains—a haven for *Sequoia sempervirens*—are threatened by rising temperatures, intense wildfires, extreme flooding, and drought.

Guided by this action plan, we are evaluating the most important refugia for redwoods in an altered climate and rethinking how we protect them. Wilderness, once set apart, needs us. For example, Indigenous people are actively using fire and other traditional ecological knowledge to keep forests healthy, which reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire. The threats from climate change make this approach more necessary than ever. A hands-on approach to forest protection and active management practices will build forest resilience. These efforts include: the use of traditional and prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, restoration of natural hydrological systems, and support for vulnerable species. And there's this: well-cared for natural lands will increasingly protect nearby communities and public infrastructure from the damaging effects of extreme weather.

Redwoods protect so much: air and water quality, wildlife, and our healthy experiences in nature, and we can return the favor. A healthy human relationship with nature may just be what gives us all—redwoods and people—the best chance to thrive. We still have a great deal to do and hope you will join us in the everlasting work to keep redwoods *Sempervirens*: always green.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Barth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sara Barth, Executive Director



To the Sempervirens Fund community,

In this report you will read about your impact on the protection, recovery, restoration, and enjoyment of redwoods in the Santa Cruz mountains. With your passion and commitment—whether for the first time this past year or over the past many decades—Sempervirens Fund has been steadfast in advancing efforts to ensure redwoods are protected and can protect us.

On behalf of the Sempervirens Fund board of directors, I want to share with you some of the ways in which the organization you support is building on our work together to look ahead and envision the future redwoods deserve.

What we learned in 2023, and over the past decade of extreme impacts on redwoods, is that we have an opportunity: to establish a healthy wilderness of new old growth redwoods that people centuries from now will enjoy.

At the end of the year, the organization began a strategic planning effort that we believe will do two things: clarify our vision for redwoods to endure for generations to come; and establish the essential role Sempervirens Fund will have to accelerate the pace and advance the quality of conservation and redwood forest management.

We, the board of directors, staff, and volunteers, with your support, are prepared to harness your resolve to ensure coast redwood forests flourish, always.

Sincerely,

Evan Siegel, Board President

P.S. The Sempervirens Fund team would love to hear from you about how we can meet the moment and plan for the future. Please email redwoods@sempervirens.org with your thoughts and suggestions.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Executive Director	2
Letter from Board President	3
The Everlasting Value of Old-Growth Redwoods	4
Achieving Healthy Forests After Fire	6
Climate Action for Redwoods	8
Your Impact	10
Wild Redwoods	12
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice	14
Visiting the Redwoods	15
Thank You, Donors	16
Financial Statement	18
Our People	19

The Everlasting Value of Old-Growth Redwoods



OLD-GROWTH | FACTS

Old-Growth Lost Over Time: **95%**

Old Growth Protected Since 1900:
5,400 acres

Acres of Restoration Forestry in 2023:
476 acres

At the heart of your commitment is a passion for redwoods, and an understanding that every tree and every acre saved and cared for means the old-growth of the future begins to rise from the forest floor.

At Sempervirens Fund, and thanks to you, protecting ancient redwoods is among our

highest priorities, and pursuing that goal often begins with purchasing land. A century ago, clearcutting decimated the oldest trees in the region. Over the decades, whenever possible, we have secured what little remains of the redwoods that survived the razing of forests for timber.

Castle Rock State Park Expands

In August 2023, Sempervirens Fund successfully expanded Castle Rock State Park by 222 acres, the first expansion of a state park in the region since 2011. The six properties we sold to the state ranged from the Robert C. Kirkwood entrance, to properties in the south of the park along the Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail and the San Lorenzo River, to a 110-acre gem of old- and second-growth redwoods.

For more than a decade, Sempervirens Fund has been carefully restoring the forest to maximize the potential for old-growth to thrive and for younger trees to develop the complexities of older trees. It is here Sempervirens Fund established its stewardship expertise that now serves us at YMCA Camp Jones Gulch, San Vicente Redwoods, and so many other forests in the Santa Cruz mountains.

Upper Zayante Watershed

Ultimately feeding into the regionally critical San Lorenzo River, the Upper Zayante River watershed is important to steelhead habitat and recovery of coho salmon. With the donation of a conservation easement from private landowners to Sempervirens Fund, 120 acres in the watershed were forever protected in December. The land includes more than 67 acres of redwood forest, mostly second-growth trees with dozens of old-growth redwoods.

Saddle Mountain Conservation Area

Since 2022, at the eastern edge of Big Basin Redwoods State Park, Sempervirens Fund has been strategically purchasing and protecting redwood forests to help California State Parks expand the park, especially as they reimagine the park's future after the 2020 CZU fire. In 2023, the purchases of Sterrenzee Ridgetop and Saddle Mountain Vista, increased the complex of protected lands in the region, establishing a deeper boundary for the forest's oldest and biggest trees, still recovering, in the heart of the park.

Learn more about the vital importance of old-growth redwoods, past and future:

sempervirens.org/old-growth

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

**Laura McLendon,
Sempervirens Fund Director
of Conservation**

“Each old-growth redwood grove is highly valued in conservation because the trees have developed individual characteristics that make them resilient and provide habitat for many other species, as well as having the support of the other redwoods around them sheltering, anchoring, and nurturing one another when needed.”

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

**Kellyx Nelson,
Executive Director, San Mateo
Resource Conservation District**

“Sempervirens Fund’s commitment to comprehensive conservation and stewardship of redwood forests is key to ensuring that old-growth redwoods endure, and those important benefits begin to show up in new generations of redwoods.”





STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Melisa Cambron Perez,
Sempervirens Fund Field
Operations Manager

“A lot of our work is trying to mimic fire—removing invasive plants, decreasing overcrowded vegetation, burning biomass, putting nutrients back into the soil. Mechanical mimicry of fire is a need that comes out of the effects of colonization. Ideally the goal is to restore fire as an ecological process: one that has been practiced by Indigenous communities for millennia.”

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Nadia Hamey,
Forester, Hamey Woods

“Sempervirens Fund and the San Vicente Redwood partners are blending tried and true fire and fuel management techniques, with innovative strategies like curtain burners and carbonators in partnership with CalFire to deal with the novel conditions post-CZU fire to tackle the huge amount of fuel build-up. This is critical work for the forests certainly, and for the nearby communities to be protected.”

Achieving Healthy Forests After Fire



FIRE-RESILIENT FOREST | FACTS

Acres of Fuel Reduction: **438**

Acres of Hazard Trees Removed: **57**

Tons of Pile Burning: **260**

Your support ensures that as we care for redwood forests, we are applying all the best knowledge, including traditional Indigenous practices, to help forests not only recover, but also thrive. Our science-led active natural resource management and forestry is ushering in new, comprehensive approaches to establishing climate and fire resiliency in forests, whether recovering from fire or from decades of neglect.

Fighting Fire

Three years after the 2020 CZU fire, resilient forests are recovering, and fire-adapted

species like redwoods, yerba santa, ceanothus, and bush poppies are restoring color to the landscape. But these lush signs of nature's rebirth after fire can quickly become fuel for the next fire. How can we restore these ecosystems from a damaging past for an uncertain future? Innovative conservation strategies can both help reinvigorate natural processes and reduce the spread of catastrophic wildfires.

Innovative Techniques and Partnerships

2023 was a busy and significant year for healthy forest recovery. With partners and other experts, we are deploying cutting-edge conservation strategies to heal and restore forests and optimize ecological health and habitat diversity. Innovative fire mitigation tactics like prescribed burns, strategic thinning, and shaded fuel breaks help shift forests towards more resilient, pre-colonial conditions, and reduce the spread of catastrophic wildfires. They also improve safety for nearby communities. Meanwhile, technologies like air curtain burners and carbonators help us deal with the aftermath of fire by safely and efficiently eliminating fuels from the land to protect the forest for future resiliency.

Partnering with Indigenous communities to center traditional ecological knowledge is a crucial component of fire mitigation strategies. Sempervirens Fund and our partners at San Vicente Redwoods have worked closely with both the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band (AMTB) and Amah Mutsun Land Trust (AMLT), to return fire to the land. We are also grateful to support AMLT with conducting studies of post-fire effects, leveraging the uncommonly exposed forest floor to survey a baseline of the reemerging plants, and to help AMTB members look for clues to how the Awaswas-speaking peoples lived on and cared for this land.

Beyond the immediate advantages for fire prevention and recovery, wildfire mitigation efforts help improve forest health by increasing viable habitat, carbon storage, and improved resilience to climate change. Catastrophic wildfire is devastating to communities, but fire mitigation strategies—including returning fire to the land through cultural and prescribed burns—have the power to heal.

Learn more about establishing healthy forests: sempervirens.org/resilient-forests

Climate Action for Redwoods

REDWOODS & CLIMATE | FACTS

Trees Downed by Storms in 2023:
Thousands

Acres Protected since 2022: **1,275**

Supporter Actions Taken for
Redwoods: **4,802**

Without you, our efforts to achieve the bigger, more ambitious goals necessary for the survival of redwoods in the face of extreme climate conditions would fall short. For more than a century, Sempervirens Fund has been dedicated to taking decisive action to ensure redwoods survive. Today, we stand at a critical juncture, centering our conservation efforts on bolstering climate resiliency, for the redwoods and the habitats they support and connect.

What's at stake?

Following the worst drought in at least 1,200 years, more than a dozen atmospheric river storms delivered historic rainfall to the region in early 2023. Meanwhile, average temperatures in the region have gone up 2°F

in just the past half century. These extreme shifts and events, including the 2020 CZU wildfire, are putting tremendous stress on redwoods to survive, much less thrive, at the southern end of their range.

Taking Action

It's time to take bold action to ensure a future for redwood forests in the Santa Cruz mountains. Backed by decades of research and more than a century of experience protecting and stewarding these forests, Sempervirens Fund launched its Climate Action Plan in 2023. This initiative pursues an urgently needed new approach to stewarding the natural communities of the Santa Cruz mountains.

For redwoods to survive, we believe:

- **Protecting Land** must feature properties where redwoods will thrive, now and in the future, prioritizing connectivity to other protected lands, elevation, and sources of water.
- **Stewardship** must be comprehensive across ecosystems, merging data, research, expertise, and traditional Indigenous knowledge.

Together we can protect land for redwoods to survive now and thrive in the long run, steward forests for resilience, and help nature protect people and communities. If successful, we will protect 7,000 acres of land by 2030, increase the regional capacity of redwoods to store carbon, increase the resiliency of ecosystem services to communities, and so much more.

We invite you to see the details, and goals, of our Climate Action Plan for yourself: sempervirens.org/climate-action





STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Rachel Dann,
Sempervirens Fund Director of Government Relations

“The alarms have rung, and we are responding. Centering our conservation strategy on climate resiliency is the best bet for the survival of redwoods, especially at the southern end of the range, where the stresses are greatest.”

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Dylan Skybrook,
Manager, Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network

“Sempervirens Fund is pursuing exactly the kind of approach to forest resiliency that climate conditions demand. By bringing together advanced research, data, modeling, and partnerships they have a comprehensive view into the lands most important to protect today for redwoods to endure climate change.”

YOUR IMPACT

ACRES
PROTECTED

202



ACRES
CARED FOR

12,696

ACRES SOLD
TO EXPAND PARKS

222





**ACRES OF PLANNED BURNS
& FUEL REDUCTION**

438



**RESEARCH
PROJECTS**

10



**STUDENT
INTERNS**

7



**ADVOCACY
ACTIONS**

4,802



**STATE PARKS
EXPANDED**

1



**MARBLED MURRELET
DETECTIONS**

13

Wild Redwoods

WILDLIFE | FACTS

Properties Monitored for Wildlife: **24**

ARUs Deployed: **8**

Marbled Murrelets Detections: **13**

Our redwoods are only healthy and thriving if wildlife are flourishing and returning to the region after fire. Your support ensures that in our pursuit of healthy forests we are paying equal attention to the animals that need the forests to survive.

Through research and wildlife monitoring, we gain insight into the lives of the creatures inhabiting the land, water, and air. And in 2023, monitoring and stewardship has helped us make better choices for forests and wildlife to thrive.

Peregrine Falcons

One of only three known peregrine falcon nests within a 15-mile radius of Santa Cruz is at San Vicente Redwoods. The nest, perched in rocky outcroppings, as peregrine falcons traditionally do, has been monitored by

Predatory Bird Research Group at University California Santa Cruz for several years. Peregrine falcons remain fully protected in California, and successful hatchlings are banded to continue gathering information on the species.

Coho Salmon

After a dam was removed along San Vicente Redwoods' Mill Creek in 2021, researchers from the University of California Los Angeles and Amah Mutsun Land Trust conducted environmental DNA (eDNA) surveys along the creek for evidence of returning Coho salmon. In addition to visual sightings of salmon fry in 2022—for the first time in a century—we are collaborating with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to trace the origins of the Coho salmon down to a family level. This effort aims to enhance our understanding of this species' migration patterns and its return to the region.

Marbled Murrelets

As far inland as YMCA Camp Jones Gulch, in La Honda, Sempervirens Fund is deploying audio recording units (ARUs) throughout the region to map detections of marbled murrelets. Placed along strategically selected flyways—rivers and creeks—in

the forest, the ARUs can be set to record sounds at sunrise and sunset when marbled murrelets are most active in the forest. The recordings can help confirm if marbled murrelets were at a location and helps us adjust stewardship activities away from nesting sites. In 2023, multiple detections at Camp Jones Gulch delighted researchers, who were not certain murrelets would nest so far inland.

Learn more about protecting wildlife:
sempervirens.org/wildlife



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

**Beatrix Jiménez-Helsley,
Sempervirens Fund Natural
Resource Manager**

“Protecting wildlife in redwoods forests is essential to our goal of comprehensive ecosystem health. Understanding where wildlife are, what they are doing, and when helps us to protect them and to manage, restore, and explore natural resources holistically.”

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

**Portia Halbert, Senior Environmental
Scientist, Santa Cruz District,
California State Parks**

“Monitoring wildlife is a truly valuable indication of the health of forests and helps Sempervirens Fund and its partners establish the best possible stewardship plans to restore its vitality. Searching for and finding marbled murrelets is especially insightful because it pinpoints forest canopy health, which is very difficult to assess.”



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice



Your commitment to Sempervirens Fund not only helps ensure that redwoods in the Santa Cruz mountains are protected and cared for, but also helps Sempervirens Fund grow and deepen our own organization's commitment to a healthy human relationship with forests. Over the past year, our staff and board have expanded and made progress in programmatic efforts to celebrate diversity, foster inclusion, advance equity, and realize justice.

Our staff and board have grown, both in size and diversity, to meet the demands of the important work to help redwoods thrive and survive in a time of climate change. This enables us to harness diverse cultural and professional perspectives and expertise in our efforts.

Our stories have also shifted to reflect on the troubling origins of the conservation movement, the progress made, and the progress still needed in conservation sciences and outdoor experiences.

Our land stewardship team has built partnerships with University of California Santa Cruz and other programs to introduce seven interns to our efforts to improve

the fire, climate, and habitat resiliency of redwood forests.

To manifest our vision for redwoods, diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice are critical facets of our work. We will continue to build on the progress we have made together. We invite you to learn more about our philosophy, commitment, and our four core focus areas:

sempervirens.org/commitment



Visiting the Redwoods

As enduring as the redwoods themselves is our joy in getting outdoors and enjoying time among these magnificent trees. In 2023 progress has been made to expand and re-establish park and trail experiences in the Santa Cruz mountains.

Five years ago, you helped us celebrate the opening of a modern new entrance at Castle Rock State Park. In 2023, along with five other properties, Sempervirens Fund completed the permanent transfer of the

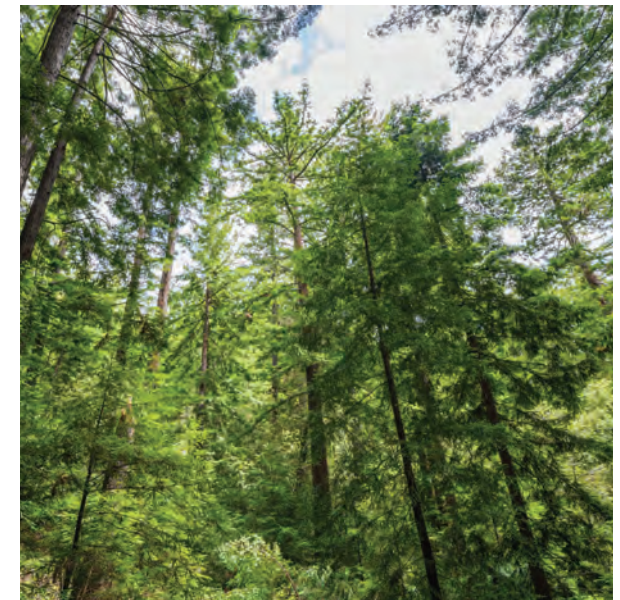
entrance to California State Parks. Now this welcoming hub of trails will forever connect visitors to waterfalls, sandstone formations and bouldering, and pathways to redwoods.

Also in 2023, Big Basin Redwoods State Park continued to regrow its network of open, accessible, and beautiful trails, centered on the Redwood Loop in the heart of the park's old-growth grove of redwoods. With your support, we have helped fund work to clear trails and establish temporary visitor-serving

facilities while the park continues to plan for its—and our—future experiences among the tall trees.

And thanks to our partners, you may have taken your first hike, ride, or roll along the trails at San Vicente Redwoods and witnessed the incredible regrowth in the aftermath of the 2020 CZU fire.

Find your destination in the Santa Cruz mountains: sempervirens.org/visit



Thank You, Donors!

A tree's rings tell a story of its life and its experience in the natural world. We think of your support as the story of our organization's life and our efforts together to ensure that redwoods endure in the Santa Cruz mountains, for many hundreds of years 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 2023. Thank you!



YOUR DECADES OF GENEROSITY

5+ DECADES 33 DONORS (–1982)

4 DECADES 1,001 DONORS (1983–1992)

3 DECADES 1,043 DONORS (1993–2002)

2 DECADES 725 DONORS (2003–2012)

1 DECADE 3,492 DONORS (2013–2022)

NEWEST RING 2,689 DONORS (2023)



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

HEATHER TUREY

Recently, I went on a hike at Camp Jones Gulch, which led to a grove of old-growth redwoods, trees which may be over 2,000 years old. I stood gazing at one of these mysterious giants. It was already hundreds of years old before the earliest form of the English language had been spoken. And I thought, here it is—not a relic, but a vibrant life form—soaring impossibly upward, regulating water, cleaning carbon from the air, supporting creatures, and stunning people like me. Thank you for your enduring and steadfast dedication to the redwoods.

MARY ISAKSEN

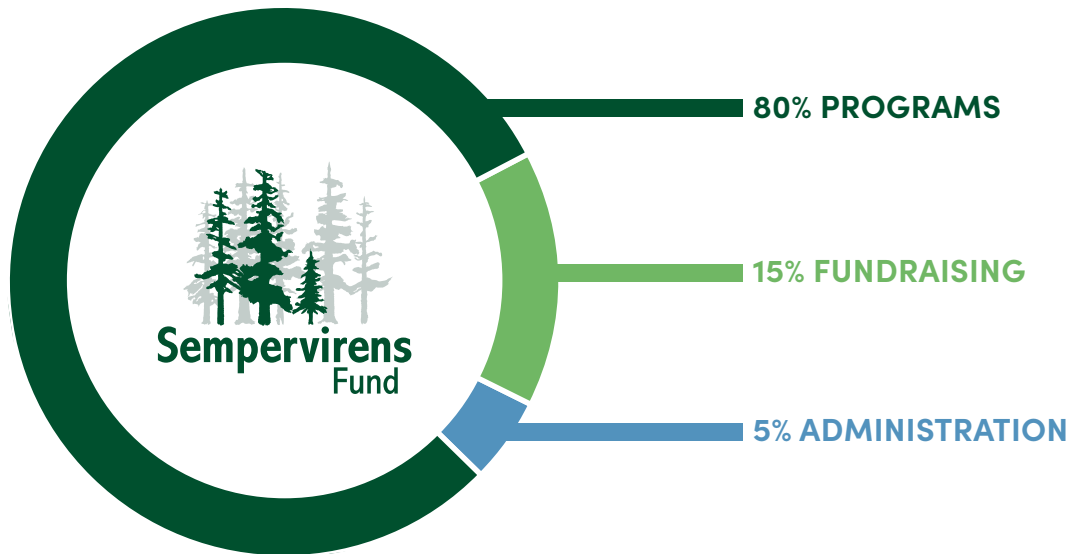
I've had a lifelong connection to the Santa Cruz Mountains. My aunt lived in Bonny Doon, and we frequently vacationed in Felton and Santa Cruz. I always felt a redwood forest was magical, rare, life-giving. I had the privilege of living in Felton as an adult, right among the trees, for 23 years. They were my neighbors and friends. They are where I go when life gets to be too much. And besides, who in their right mind wouldn't want to protect our environment? It's all we have.

HALLI BOURNE

I visited redwoods for the first time in 1996. Before, I couldn't have comprehended the majesty of these giants. Time ceased to make sense. The overwhelming feeling of awe and wonder filled my being and a love for all trees was born. I have carried a small photo from that visit with me to the many places I have lived. Taken at a distance, my small figure is dwarfed by the height and width of the redwood I stood beside. Looking at it reminds me of this feeling of awe and wonder, and the importance of protecting these beings and heeding their wisdom.

Financial Statement

Your support is hard at work. Eighty 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. sempervirens.org/financial-statement





BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Evan Siegel,
President
Peter Staple
Vice President
Gage Dayton, Ph.D.,
Secretary
Juan Benitez
Marimo Berk
Channing Chen*
Kevin Flynn
William N. Harris
Pamela Koch
Brad Lewis**
Kent Putnam
Stephen M. Reed*
Diane Talbert
Vishy Venugopalan
Michael Watkins
Jacqueline B. Wender
Stephen N. Wyckoff, J.D.*
** retired 2023*
*** joined 2024*

SCIENCE ADVISORY PANEL

Gage Dayton, Ph.D.,
Chair
Anthony R. Ambrose, Ph.D.
Emily Burns, Ph.D.
Philippe S. Cohen, Ph.D.
David L. Freyberg, Ph.D.
Alan E. Launer, Ph.D.
Virginia Matzek, Ph.D.
Lisa Micheli, Ph.D.
Wallace J. Nichols, Ph.D.
Scott Stephens, Ph.D.
Chris Wilmers, Ph.D.

STAFF

Sara Barth,
Executive Director
Beryl Anderson
Ann Blanchard
Melisa Cambron Perez
Rachel Dann
Ori Faigon
Erin Farris
Miranda Fry
Patrick Gibbons

Lauren Hofmayer, CFRE
Beatrix Jiménez-Helsley
Michael A. Kawalek, CFRE
Amanda Krauss, CFRE
Christine Larusso
Christopher Lopez
Kyle Macdonald
Laura McLendon
Paige Rausser
Ian Rowbotham
Julie Seelen, CFRE
Matthew Shaffer
Lizzy Shramko
Logan Thompson
Lillian Tsai

REDWOOD CIRCLE

Philippe S. Cohen, Ph.D.
Richard Conniff
Robert L. Katz
Fred Keeley
Ellie and Dick Mansfield
Dan Martin
Emily Thurber
Cole Wilbur



Paper: Printed using Chorus Art paper, which is manufactured using 30% PCW pulp. It is ECF (elemental chlorine free) and acid free.

Photos: Ian Bornarth, Russell Ferretti-Hoyle, Beatrix Jimenez, John Kraus, and Orenda Randuch.

Design: shirleycreative.com

© 2024 Sempervirens Fund



P.O. Box 1417
Los Altos, California 94023-1417

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SACRAMENTO, CA
PERMIT NO. 195

sempervirens.org

You can fund a thriving forest
future with a gift in your will
or other estate plan.

