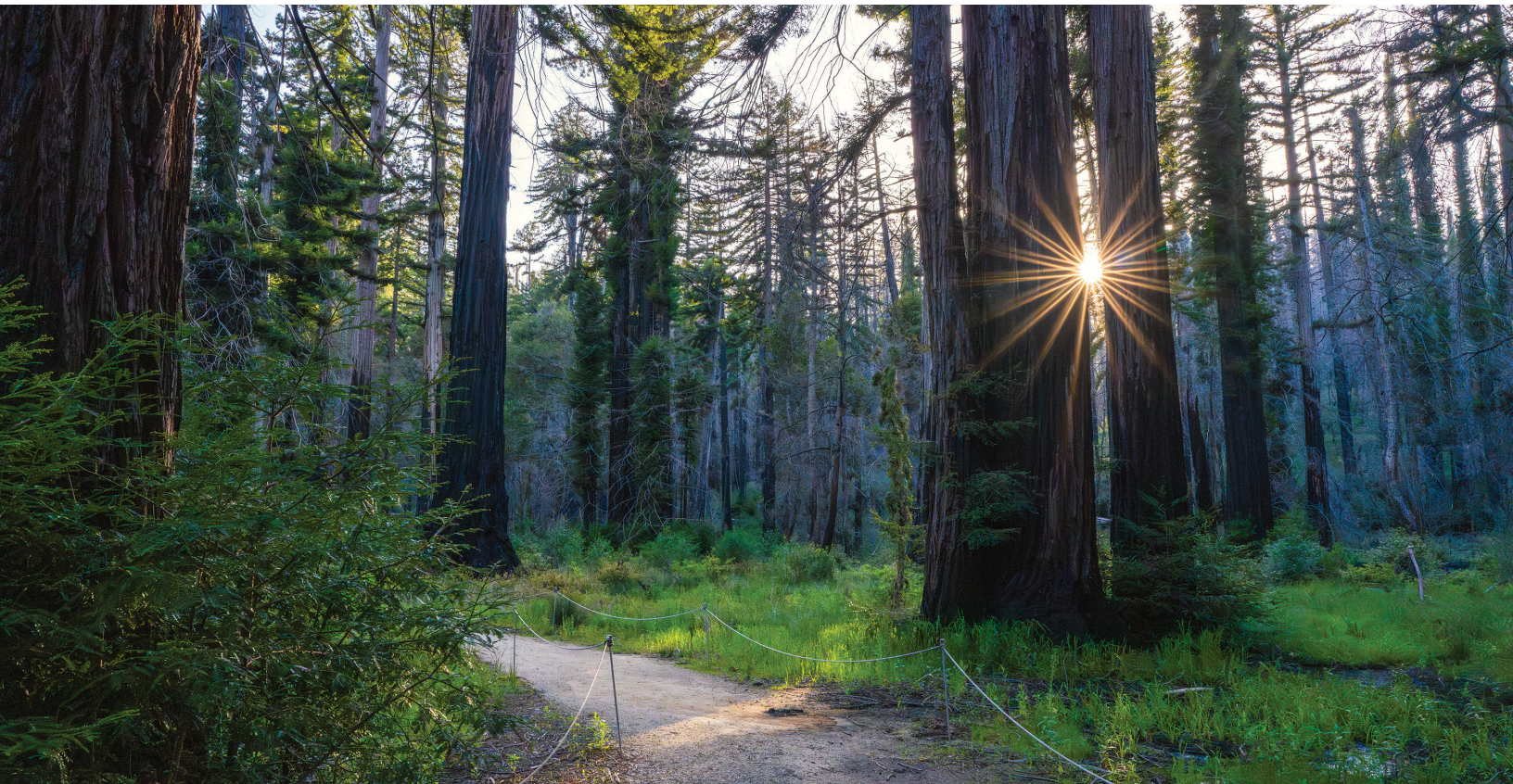


# Mountain Echo

THE NEWSLETTER OF SEMPERVIRENS FUND | FALL 2024



## Protecting Redwoods' Future

**With your support today, we can help redwoods succeed in overcoming threats like climate change and thrive for centuries. As we look out over the Santa Cruz mountains, and assess the data, research, and conditions, we have high hopes for redwoods, and in 2024 we made significant progress in ensuring redwoods' future.**

### **Climate Action: Conservation**

Our Climate Action Plan guides our work to overcome extreme shifts in climate in the Santa Cruz mountains. Protecting the last remaining old-growth redwoods and helping second-generation forests reach true maturity remain central to our work. And robust data is helping us understand where redwoods are most at risk, and where they may find the greatest refuge.

South of 37 degrees latitude, or just north of Santa Cruz, redwoods are experiencing heat and

drought more severely. They are growing less in volume and height. They are stressed. And with predictions of more wildfire, more drought, and hotter temperatures in this range, we are looking closely at conservation opportunities where climate conditions are likely to bulwark against these threats.

The 2020 CZU wildfire was devastating for forests and communities, but out of the ashes rises a new hope for redwoods. Their new story begins with conservation: land acquisition and stewardship.





## BIG BASIN'S FUTURE

In 2024, work to expand Big Basin Redwoods State Park—at the heart of the CZU fire devastation—reached a critical milestone thanks to your enduring support. The park's new future requires new facilities, visitor-serving experiences, and expanded conservation to better protect the old-growth groves within. Expansion of the Saddle Mountain Conservation Area will ensure that planning allows future amenities to have the space needed for success.

Learn more: [sempervirens.org/saddle-mountain](https://sempervirens.org/saddle-mountain)

**What's Next:** As California State Parks continues Reimagining Big Basin, Sempervirens Fund is committed to improving the resilience and health of the Saddle Mountain Conservation Area forests. We are working on a pathway to transferring these lands to State Parks as soon as possible.



## REDWOODS RECOVERY

Rising to ridgelines that define the region between Big Basin, Año Nuevo State Park, and Butano State Park are largely undeveloped but significantly burned redwood forests, watersheds, and habitats that need protecting. And their future could well be key to redwoods' future.

Data shows this region is a biodiverse and well-situated zone for redwoods to thrive in climate change. This fall, we successfully protected Año Nuevo Vista, 41 acres of habitat types from redwood forest to quickly disappearing maritime chaparral. The headwaters of Old Woman's Creek spring here and feed into Gazos Creek, a critical habitat and regional watershed. Protection and conservation of this land will be vital to helping redwoods both recover from wildfire and withstand climate change.

Learn more: [sempervirens.org/ano-nuevo-vista](https://sempervirens.org/ano-nuevo-vista)

**What's Next:** Here in the area around Año Nuevo Vista and throughout the Santa Cruz mountains, we are pursuing nearly a dozen conservation opportunities, including significant old-growth groves, easements with redwood-forested camps, and more.





### **POLICIES FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION**

Among our Climate Action Plan priorities are advocacy goals to improve conservation funding in California, and next month two vital measures will be put in front of voters. Proposition 4, a statewide Climate Bond of \$10 billion will establish essential funding for nature-based solutions, wildfire, flooding, and drought resilience. Additionally, Prop 4 will provide important new funding for California State Parks to acquire land and expand parks.

And in Santa Cruz County, the Water and Wildfire Protection measure would establish \$7.5 million annually to protect local water resources and forests, reduce the risk of dangerous wildfires, and restore wildlife habitats.

Learn more in our Action Center: [sempervirens.org/action-center](https://sempervirens.org/action-center)

### **Looking Ahead to 2025**

Founded in 1900, Sempervirens Fund turns 125 next year, and our work has never been more critical. While the threats to redwoods have largely changed, the risks to their future are greater now than ever before. We are poised to meet that challenge thanks to your steadfast commitment to ensuring redwoods are Sempervirens, always green.

Soon we will be sharing our strategic priorities for the next five years, and these objectives will make clear: we are in it for the long haul and through partnership, dynamic stewardship, and expanded conservation, we can make sure redwoods thrive for centuries to come.

Sign up to receive our emails and be among the first to hear about our plans through 2030: [sempervirens.org/email-news](https://sempervirens.org/email-news)





## How a Hike Heals

In 2024, Sempervirens Fund launched its Trails Prescription program for the Santa Cruz Mountains—a curated trail guide centered on maximizing the health benefits of time in nature, and the specific features of five easy-rated trails at regional California State Parks.

Our wellness advisor, Dr. Suzanne Bartlett Hackenmiller, advised on the program, and shared, “Nature has the ability to heal and rejuvenate both the body and soul. Countless studies have shown that spending time outdoors not only improves physical health but mental well-being as well. From reducing stress levels to boosting immune function, the benefits of nature on health are undeniable.”

This past summer Latino Outdoors’ Verónica Silva-Miranda shared her impressions of time spent on one of the TrailsRx destinations: Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park’s Redwood Grove Loop.

Read Verónica’s insightful essay and join us in discovering the health benefits of nature through our Trails Prescription program:

[sempervirens.org/healing-under-redwoods](https://sempervirens.org/healing-under-redwoods)

### FROM HER ESSAY

“The grove provides a place of exploration, healing, learning, and gives that WOW feeling. The loop will have you looking up at these beautiful towering trees that are so tall you cannot see the top from the ground floor.

I can honestly say that spending time underneath redwood trees has helped me adjust to the high blood pressure medication I was prescribed. I think the benefits of spending time amongst these ancient trees is beneficial to everyone, but especially important to those that have had to transition to taking medication, overcoming an injury, or finding a balance for one’s mental health.

Visiting redwood parks definitely helps me gather my thoughts, have deep conversations with friends and family. When I’m alone sometimes I find a place to sit and write in my journal or jot down notes of things to accomplish or changes to be made.”

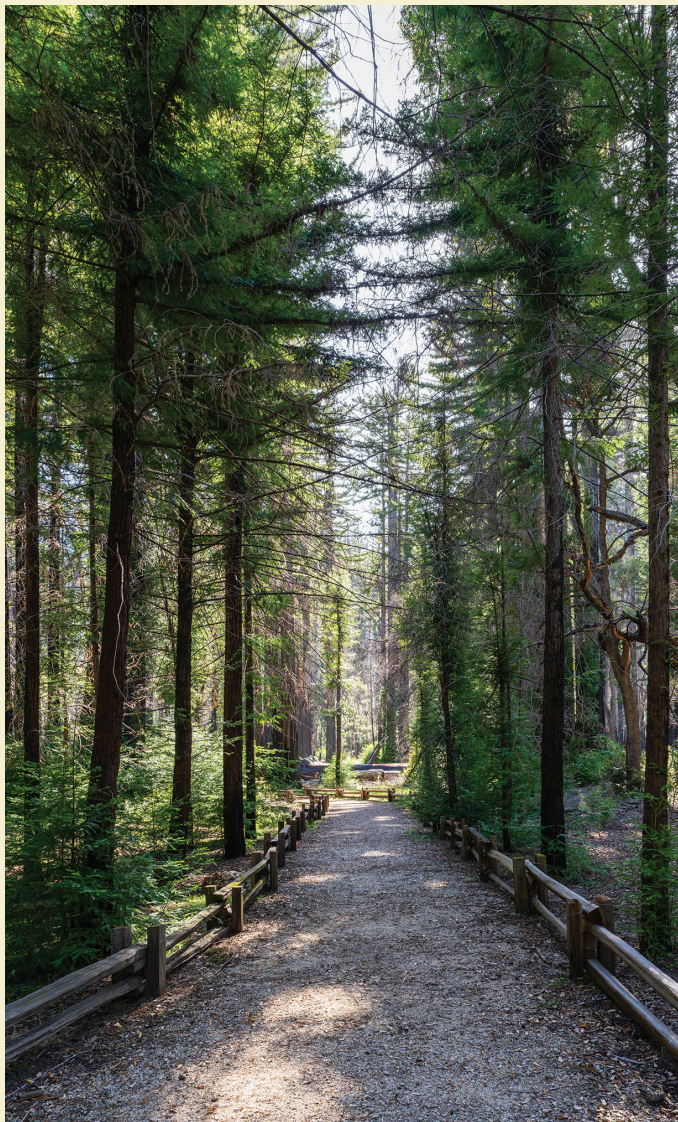


# Donors' Delight



Marion and Chuck Krause are on the cusp of their 50th wedding anniversary, and these high-school sweethearts have made time in nature—and supporting causes that protect nature—their priorities. “We were both brought up spending time in nature,” says Marion. “It has always been a big part of our lives.”

Now living in Palo Alto, the Krauses encountered redwoods one of the first times during an excursion up the north coast. “We saw some very large old-growth redwoods,” recalled Chuck. “They are so magnificent. We were immediately struck by these giant pillars going up in the sky and it was so, so quiet.”



Protecting redwoods became a hallmark of their giving. They dedicated a redwood grove on the coast side of Big Basin, off the Skyline-to-the-Sea Trail, three miles into Rancho del Oso. When Ben, their one and only son, “found out we were dedicating a grove he kidded, ‘that’s my money!’ That’s why we named it Ben’s Grove of Dismay and Our Delight,” said Chuck. “We also support Sempervirens Fund annually through our donor-advised fund (DAF), which appeals to us because we can put a tax-deductible amount in there each year and make our gifts from it throughout the year. It is a commitment we feel strongly about.”

Reflecting on the CZU fire, Marion offers wisdom: “There needs to be fire from time to time. Working with tribes like the Amah Mutsun to introduce burns will help reduce catastrophic fires. It is amazing to see how the redwoods are recovering from wildfire. But they need fire from time to time to rejuvenate.”

“We need organizations like Sempervirens Fund to ensure the redwoods will continue to be there,” added Chuck.

Join Marion and Chuck in supporting Sempervirens Fund: [sempervirens.org/donate](https://sempervirens.org/donate)





## Revisiting Mill Creek

In October 2021, a year after the CZU fire tore through Big Basin Redwoods State Park and San Vicente Redwoods, an obsolete dam on Mill Creek was removed. This marked the monumental conclusion of a decade-long effort to restore the creek's beds for Coho salmon.

Such large-scale restoration projects require time, patience, funding, and a bit of luck. Thanks to our community's support for redwoods conservation and stewardship, we were able to quickly leverage emergency funding in early 2021 from Open Rivers Fund, a program of Resources Legacy Fund supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

But the opportunity realized in 2021 was borne out of a vision for the creek established nearly a decade earlier.

Mill Creek, located in the San Vicente watershed, is part of an exceptional regional creek system

with drought-resistant, cool, and heavy flows that feed directly into the Pacific Ocean. For more than a century, the Mill Creek dam blocked fish from traveling upstream and prevented the cobble essential for their spawning habitat from moving downstream.

From clearing downstream forests of non-native clematis, to installations of large woody debris in stream beds, to selective thinning of trees to improve canopy cover, Sempervirens Fund and its partners laid the groundwork for Coho salmon recovery. Yet, the dam remained a significant obstacle.

Once the dam came down, not only did the water and cobble flow, but luck intervened. Heavy storms in winter 2021 carved the newly opened creek bed into a channel, releasing cobble that caught in the installed debris downstream. And in fall 2022, for the first time in at least a century, salmon fry were located in Mill Creek.





### WHAT'S NEXT

Thanks to our extraordinary collaboration with partners such as Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz, Peninsula Open Space Trust, Save the Redwoods League, Land Trust Santa Cruz County, and researchers from UCLA, UCSC, San Jose State, and the Amah Mutsun Land Trust, we continue to enhance Mill Creek. Through 2025, we will organize ongoing salmon surveys and sampling and prepare for new, large woody debris installations, which will reinforce the cobble beds critical for spawning.

Learn all about cobble, Coho, and creek beds, and rewatch the dam's demolition and the creek's resurgence:

[sempervirens.org/cobble](https://sempervirens.org/cobble)

## TAX-WISE GIVING

**FROM APPRECIATED STOCK TO RMD/ QCD GIVING, MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR REDWOODS.**

[sempervirens.org/tax-wise-giving](https://sempervirens.org/tax-wise-giving)

**RECOMMEND A GIFT FOR REDWOODS FROM YOUR DONOR-ADVISED FUND.**

[sempervirens.org/daf](https://sempervirens.org/daf)

**DOES YOUR EMPLOYER MATCH YOUR GIVING? DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT FOR REDWOODS.**

[sempervirens.org/corporate-match](https://sempervirens.org/corporate-match)



# Habitat Stewardship

When you visit redwoods, you likely gaze upward, marveling in their magnitude. We do too. Protecting these majestic trees has always been at the heart of Sempervirens Fund's mission. Thanks to your support, stewardship experts are also nurturing redwoods from the ground up.

Planning for forest health is complex. The Santa Cruz mountains are very biodiverse with crisscrossing habitats. Understanding these distinct environments allows us to help nature thrive, including the redwoods. Here are some of the habitats you ensure we care for, so they in turn can support the redwoods:



## GRASSLANDS

Grasslands in the Santa Cruz mountains are disappearing. Nestled inland from Cotoni-Coast Dairies, along the Pacific Ocean, is a ridge of grassland habitat edging into redwood forests. Sempervirens Fund stewardship experts are restoring 106 acres of native grass species like California Oat Grass and Purple Needle Grass (California's state grass) that help feed the forest.

Watch the story: [sempervirens.org/grasslands](https://sempervirens.org/grasslands)



## SANDHILLS

Nearly as ancient as redwoods, a 15-million-year-old sea floor emerges among the giants. Its Zayante soil, comprising about 92% sand, can't hold onto many nutrients or water. But these hot, dry pockets—starkly contrasting with their wet, dark redwood forest neighbors—support numerous species adapted to their extreme conditions, some of which aren't found anywhere else.

Learn more: [sempervirens.org/sandhills](https://sempervirens.org/sandhills)



## CHAPARRAL

Chaparral is a broad plant community of woody, evergreen shrubs, well suited to life in the Santa Cruz mountains. Chaparral resides low in the driest, hottest slopes and along the coast in the rare "maritime chaparral." Although chaparral is flammable and burns at high intensity, fires every few decades are exactly what some native plants need to survive and thrive over invasive plant competition.

Learn more about chaparral: [sempervirens.org/chaparral](https://sempervirens.org/chaparral)



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