

Mountain Echo

THE NEWSLETTER OF SEMPERVIRENS FUND | WINTER 2025



Restoring Redwoods

While Sempervirens Fund was founded in 1900 to respond to the clearcutting of redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains, redwoods today face an additional unprecedented threat. Temperatures are increasing, drought and precipitation are intensifying, and redwoods are vulnerable to the extreme weather and wildfires associated with climate change. Combined with the ongoing habitat fragmentation and commercial development in the region, the impacts on forests, watersheds, wildlife, and human communities have the potential to be catastrophic unless we act now.

For 125 years, Sempervirens Fund has sought to protect redwoods. While much of our legacy is marked by the magnificent—and permanently protected—public

parks in the Santa Cruz Mountains, we have grown our expertise in restoring forests in the 21st century. With less than 5% of the oldest redwoods remaining, protecting them is critical. Equally important is the restoration forestry across the more than 12,000 acres we own—laying the foundation for the old-growth forests of the future.

In partnership with *Bay Nature* magazine and writer Audrea Lim, Sempervirens Fund co-published a feature on pivotal moments that affirm why investing in the active restoration of redwood forests is worth the effort, time, resources—and your support.

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Exploring Redwoods and the Elements

Redwoods are full of remarkable features, and each new discovery is a powerful reminder of why protecting and restoring them in the Santa Cruz Mountains matters. In our sixth season of *Under the Redwoods*, our free monthly webinar series, we are getting back to the roots of our love for redwoods, exploring redwoods and the elements: air, land, water, and fire.

In January, we were joined by fog expert Dr. Daniel Fernandez. We learned about fog types and how studying fog events helps us understand the complex relationship between air and trees, like redwoods.

Did you know:

- **Redwoods create rain.** Specialized redwood leaves capture moisture droplets from fog, absorbing some but also creating an artificial rainfall.

- **Climate change is impacting fog.** And without fog, the upper branches of older redwoods can't absorb the necessary moisture to reach their mature heights, leading to dead tops or stunted growth.
- **Old-growth redwoods love fog.** At some 200–300 feet of height, these giants rely on atmospheric moisture to sustain their highest reaches, absorbing fog droplets through their leaves rather than sucking it up through the full length of the trunk.

For more on the mysteries of fog—including a special sound experience of redwood fog and needle rain—learn more here:

sempervirens.org/fog

For past and future webinars, register for the free series and catch up on recordings with experts:

sempervirens.org/webinars

ALWAYS GREEN!

In 1900, your fellow Sempervirens Fund supporters launched the redwoods conservation movement. Join us throughout 2025 to reflect on your 125-year legacy of protecting redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains to help ensure redwoods remain *sempervirens*—always green: sempervirens.org/always-green

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Much of restoration forestry centers on overcoming decades of human activity, often featuring timber harvesting. In 2008, Sempervirens Fund purchased 110 acres at the intersection of Highways 236 and 9 near Boulder Creek—in desperate need of restoration. From the story:

The redwoods were crowded shoulder to shoulder, on dirt eerily devoid of branches or fallen trunks. The old industrial forest “looked kind of artificial,” recalled [former Sempervirens Fund Executive Director Reed] Holderman. The former owners were “basically growing the trees like crops.” It looked nothing like a redwood forest. The land trust brought in consulting ecologists, soil experts, and foresters. To determine whether a plantation could be restored to a thriving ecosystem that supports thousands of other species, “we basically decided to try to figure out, how do you transition an industrial forest into an old-growth redwood forest?” Holderman said.

Today, this once-unnatural forest can be enjoyed at Castle Rock State Park where it continues to regain the

diversity of age and species a forest needs to thrive thanks to your support. Through restoration forestry, we’re able to help trees grow bigger and forests recover more quickly so they can provide habitat and carbon storage and remain resilient in the face of climate change. At Sempervirens Fund, we believe that establishing forest resilience for the old-growth forests of the future means emphasizing ecological restoration through forest health projects, watershed restoration, and species protection efforts.

This is complex work, and as our executive director, Sara Barth, suggests in Lim’s story, “We must approach this management work with urgency combined with humility” and a willingness to try new methods, evaluate their effectiveness, and adapt if they’re not working. We also have to be patient—we are on nature’s timeline, and trees grow slowly.

We invite you to read the full story and learn more about Sempervirens’ commitment to the lasting restoration of redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains:

sempervirens.org/restoring-forests

Supporting Redwoods Across the Generations

KAREN LAW: A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Karen Law spends most of her time thinking about problem-solving for a sustainable future. As a dedicated sustainability investor, she leverages both capital and philanthropy to foster short- and long-term change. For inspiration, she turns to the redwoods.



Karen Law on a frequent visit to redwoods near her home.

“As a child, I didn’t have a lot of outdoor education, and at eight years old, a family friend took us on an outing in the Santa Cruz Mountains, and it was the first time I was invited to listen to and feel life in a redwood forest,” Karen reflects. “Redwoods give me perspective on the timescale of human life. In my twenties I went through cancer treatment. Being in the redwoods helped calm the riot of emotions at the time. I felt alone and not alone—I felt like I was breathing healing into my lungs.”

Redwoods also inspire her to think about the collective choices we make. “I have learned a lot from Sempervirens, like the care for old-growth redwoods, overcoming fire suppression, or supporting Indigenous relationships with ancestral lands—it is important to understand the choices we make as a society. Sempervirens serves as a steady facilitator of this reminder.”

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Karen Law, continued from page 3

One of the first organizations Karen pledged to support as an adult, Sempervirens Fund has become a pillar of her philanthropic commitment: "It provides me with established and reliable continuity in sustainable action and outcomes. I also joined the Redwood Legacy Society because redwoods will endure, and

DICK WHEAT: A LIFELONG COMMITMENT

Growing up in Palo Alto in the 1920s, Dick Wheat recalls picnics in the redwoods. Little did he know then that at over 100 years old he would be reflecting on his lifelong commitment to their protection, his six decades of donor support, and our enjoyment of redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

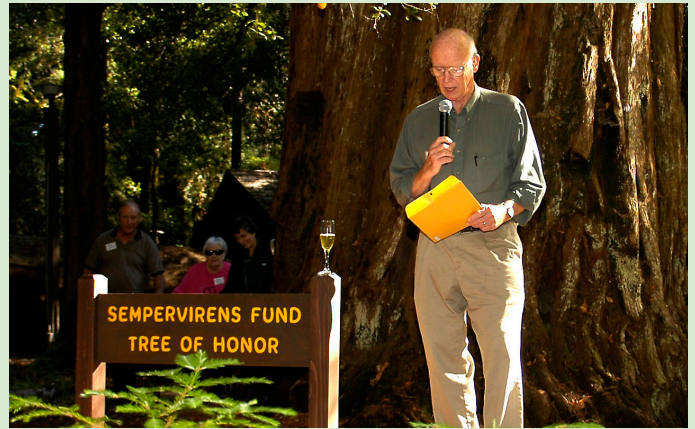
In the 1960s, Sempervirens Club was reinvented as Sempervirens Fund, under the leadership of Tony Look. Look's kitchen was the organization's office, and Dick joined Tony and others in volunteering to usher the organization into its next phase.

"Together we helped establish Castle Rock State Park and the Skyline-to-Sea Trail, from Castle Rock through Big Basin, Butano, and to the sea. The organization owes itself to Tony Look—he was a remarkable man," says Dick.

The organization grew over time, and Dick reflects, "We grew our relationship with California State Parks, leading to more campgrounds, trails, and amenities at Big Basin and other regional parks. We helped establish volunteer programs as well."

A donor since 1972, Dick served as a president for 15 years, working to build the board of directors and expand State Parks, marshal volunteers, and partner with other land trusts and the Boy Scouts, saying, "Organizations like

Sempervirens Fund has the proven history to support that lasting future of redwoods." As Karen continues learning about redwoods and conservation, she values the journey deeply: "I try to bring humility to my investing. It is a privilege to support an organization that knows what it is doing and is willing to educate others."



Dick Wheat speaking in front of Big Basin's Sempervirens Fund Tree of Honor.

Sempervirens Fund are contributing substantially to the growth of state parks. These efforts, along with replanting and reestablishing trails, are important for the future of the park following the [CZU] fire."

From the first days, donations have been important to the organization. "There are many ways to contribute: money, volunteering, and establishing tributes to loved ones through dedicated trees. We've been an environmental organization, and we've all had fun."

Join Dick in creating a lasting legacy with Sempervirens Fund: sempervirens.org/donate



FEEL GOOD EVERY MONTH

Become a Redwood Hero with a recurring monthly gift: sempervirens.org/hero



**Sempervirens
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