

REDWOODS FORWARD



Sempervirens
Fund

**Next Century
Strategic Plan:**
2024-2030



Sempervirens Fund's Strategic Plan

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Sempervirens Fund protects redwoods in California's Santa Cruz Mountains, ensuring they thrive for generations to come. Learn more: sempervirens.org



Redwoods Forward:

Resilience for the Next Century

Redwood forests can survive the threat of climate change and be a critical part of the solution. It will take urgent and ambitious action by all of us.

From the ferocious felling of redwoods by saw and ax to fuel the growth of the Bay Area at the turn of the twentieth century, to the fierce wildfires and extreme weather battering forests in the 21st century, Sempervirens Fund has led the way in identifying and responding to threats to coast redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

At the heart of our work has always been this: people from all walks of life who are inspired by the majesty of redwoods and work together to protect them. As we look ahead to the next century and work to ensure that redwoods endure, **we invite you to join us on the journey.**

Fueled by advocacy, science, innovation, and partnership, Sempervirens Fund has faced the threats to redwoods head on for 125 years. Clearcutting at the turn of the 20th century? Explosive development in the post-war period? Political attacks on essential conservation laws? Fire suppression and mismanagement of forest lands? With the support and engagement of people like you, we have always responded and always delivered critical conservation wins for redwoods.

Through this strategic plan, we are pursuing an accelerated and concentrated response to help redwoods endure the climate crisis.

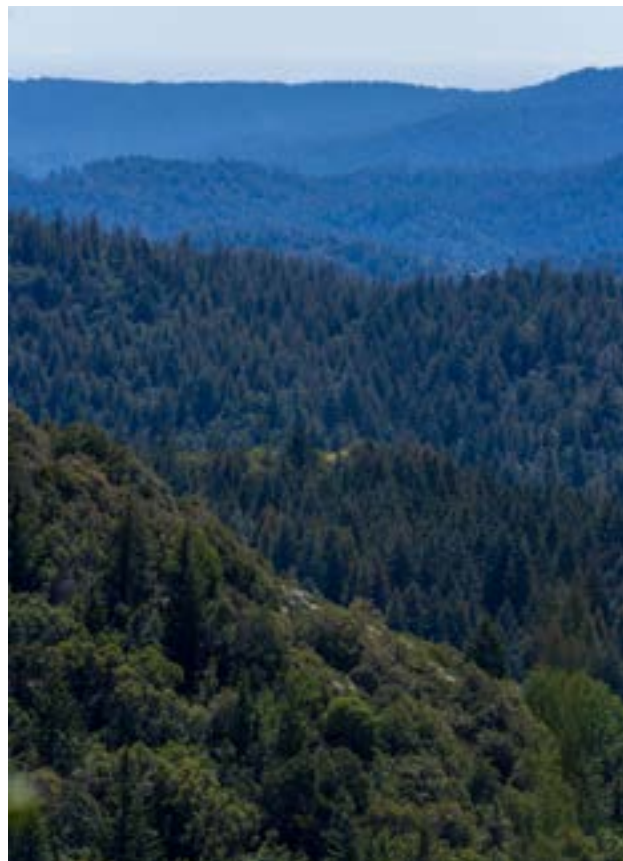




Legacy

For 125 years we have responded to threats, and we are ready for what comes next.

Our conservation legacy includes the permanent protection of more than 36,000 acres of redwoods, including land that established California's oldest state park (Big Basin Redwoods), as well as five other state parks in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Our efforts have safeguarded significant stands of old-growth redwoods and established protections that ensure younger trees will become the old-growth of the future.



We have helped connect people to redwoods by creating recreational opportunities like the iconic 32-mile Skyline to the Sea Trail, which offers an unparalleled hiking experience through incredible old-growth redwood groves spanning three state parks. And while we have maintained a focus on redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains, our work has had demonstrable ripple effects throughout the entire redwood range and beyond.

To ensure the enduring legacy of the redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains, it is imperative that people have a connection with these wildlands and understand that their fate and ours are inextricably linked.

Urgency

The pressures of development and the threat of climate change are as significant as logging was 125 years ago, and we are responding.

The threats to redwoods are more significant now than they have been since the relentless logging that threatened their extinction and inspired activists to establish Sempervirens Fund over a century ago. 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.

Learn more: sempervirens.org/climate-action-plan



Now, like then, there is a path forward to ensure these magnificent forests thrive for generations to come. As our founders did then, Sempervirens Fund is leading the way in supporting and defending these trees. **We need your direct support and engagement to succeed.**





Focus

The next century of work begins now and centers on protecting, restoring, and mobilizing support for redwoods.

Too much redwood forest in the Santa Cruz Mountains remains unprotected and fragmented: disconnected from larger forests and the surrounding ecosystems they need to survive. Tens of thousands of acres in the Santa Cruz Mountains need to be protected and connected to ensure their long-term viability. Permanently protecting thousands of acres of redwoods in the next six years will usher in a new path forward for redwoods to thrive.

The old-growth forests of the future have been taking root for the last century, and in the past few decades, Sempervirens Fund has worked with partners to establish bold new approaches to forest restoration. Our forests need significant new investments in larger-scale forest management so they might recover from human impacts. The scope and scale of that work will require a significant expansion of partnerships that extend across the public, private, and governmental sectors. Together, we will re-establish the healthy, resilient forests of the future. We must all face the threats, especially of climate change, directly.

Strategy

The journey of the next 125 years starts here: a plan for the next six years, with four focus areas, and an emphasis on innovation, partnerships, and establishing conservation models.

Our plan, “Redwoods Forward,” meets this consequential moment and serves as a beacon, illuminating our way for the next 125 years of redwood conservation. This first installment, over the next six years, will lay the groundwork for efforts that will last well into the future. It is a call to action for an accelerated, innovative, and ambitious response to climate change and other threats to redwoods.

For Sempervirens Fund, it means our work centers on both land acquisition and restoring the comprehensive health of coast redwoods and their ecosystems.



In addition to buying and protecting forest lands, we will also:



Emphasize ecological restoration and establishing forest resilience through forest health projects, watershed restoration, and species protection efforts; and we will champion this work on public lands and with other willing landowners;



Advocate for innovative and ambitious public policies that drive robust forest protection forward and elevate stewardship far beyond the lands we own; and we will defend against attacks that weaken, roll back, or end existing conservation laws and policies;



Improve access to nature and promote a deeper understanding, with the support of partners, the public, and government leaders, of how and why forests are essential to the health and well-being of our communities, connecting people, from all lived experiences, with nature and with each other.

It is imperative that we marshal strategic partnerships, innovation, scientific research and the accompanying data, and best land management practices, to extend our impact as we pursue an enduring and thriving future for redwood forests. The next 125 years of redwoods conservation will take a collective effort that carries forward the accomplishments and growth of the past century. We are ready.

Your Role

125 years ago, it was people just like you that organized to protect redwoods, launching a movement and bringing a majestic and critical species back from the brink. We carry their work forward now with renewed urgency and determination as redwoods, once again, face an existential threat to their future.

We have been here before and we are again ready to rise to the occasion. Join us!



About Redwoods Forward

A healthy and thriving coast redwood forest should be home to individual trees that have lived for thousands of years. How can we reset the trajectory of redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains?

What we now call old-growth redwoods – trees of massive size, height, and age – once dominated the inland coastal mountains of the Pacific coast, from Big Sur, California to southern Oregon. Rampant clearcutting to fuel the growth of cities at the end of the 19th century decimated these trees, eliminating 95% of the redwood forests. Conservation efforts over the 20th century centered on protecting the remaining 5% of the redwood forests by creating parks or other protected public lands.

Today, the biggest threat to the future of these forests comes not from clearcutting, but from climate change and the associated extreme weather and wildfires. The very core of our work in the 21st century is going to be enhancing redwood forests' resilience so they can withstand the impacts of climate change. But climate change is not the only threat. **To maintain viable redwood forests into the next century we will also need to address:**

- **Relentless pressure to clear the forests** to make way for development and infrastructure.
- **Poor forest management**, which undermines forest health and increases the vulnerability of redwoods to climate change.
- **Forests that are isolated islands of conservation**, disconnected from other protected landscapes and therefore less resilient over the long-term.

We also will need to help the public and decision-makers understand how important these forests are to our future, to ensure the political support that we need to save them.

What Success Looks Like

If Redwoods Forward is successful, we will not only leverage the next six years to accelerate conservation, protection, and policies for redwoods, but establish new conservation models for the region and beyond. The foundation of these models will be innovation and partnerships.



Innovation | Our Approach

Our enduring spirit of innovation drives our strategy and will guide us in boldly navigating the future.

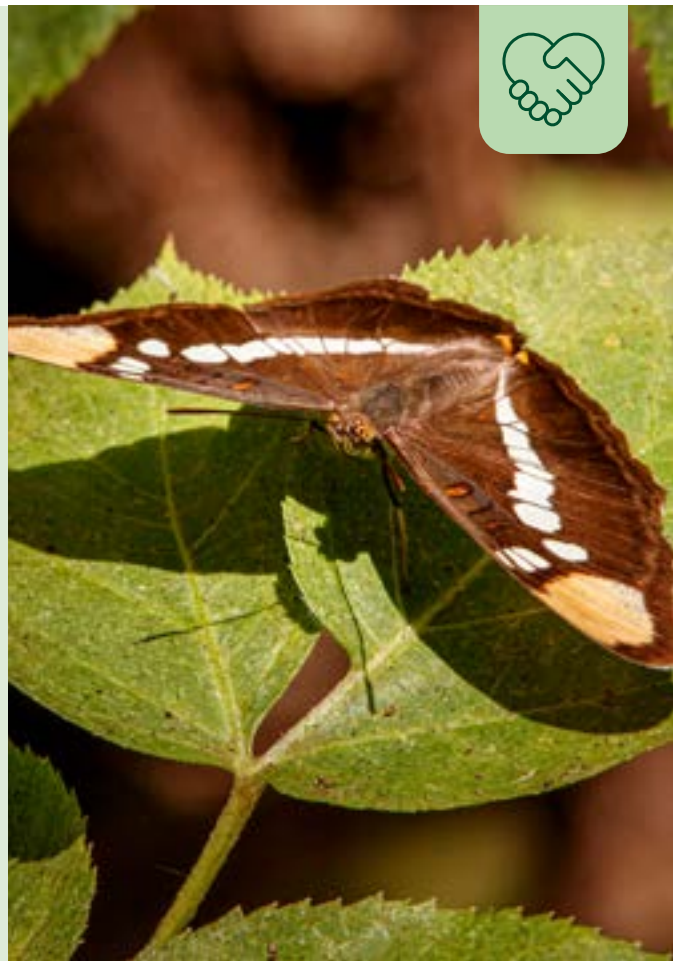
Since our founding in 1900, we have been bold changemakers. Our commitment to innovation continues today. We distinguish ourselves by embracing experimentation and taking informed risks. We test new ideas and push boundaries to expand our reach into regional conservation and advance our internal organizational development. The forests we own, manage, and restore serve as living laboratories where cutting-edge research and new forest management strategies meet traditional Indigenous knowledge in real time. Our work thrives on the edges of Silicon Valley and we draw inspiration from and forge partnerships with tech innovators and entrepreneurs who themselves are inspired by the marvels of redwood forests.



Partnerships | How we Operate

Our success, as well as that of our region, hinges on partnerships. Leveraging our reputation and deep, established partnerships, we are committed to strengthening connections to achieve our overarching goals and drive meaningful regional change.

Fundamental to realizing our vision and deeply rooted in our strategy, partnerships help us achieve scale and long-term impact. No one organization can single-handedly undertake all efforts necessary to preserve redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains. We are fortunate that our region is home to extraordinary public and private experts across many sectors of society with whom we can partner. Collaboration is essential for the present and the future of resilient, active forest management in our region.



Conservation Models | What we Achieve

Through our innovation and collaborative efforts, we establish green-prints for achieving a thriving ecosystem of redwoods and people.

As regional mobilizers, we develop conservation models for the Santa Cruz Mountain region and beyond by leveraging our innovative approach and deep partnerships. Our strategy focuses on building these models to address challenges such as climate change, development, and the disconnect between people and nature. We expect our conservation to be regional and our ideas and impact to extend beyond.



Our 2030 Strategy

Our six-year goals and objectives allow us to drive core strategies forward that strengthen the foundation for our future investments in redwoods' resilience for centuries to come. Our goals are driven by four overall strategies that will shape our efforts in the coming years:



Protect thousands of acres of at-risk redwood forests.



Restore and care for redwood forests to enhance climate resilience.



Connect people with nature.



Advance public and political support to advance conservation policies.

We believe that these four focus areas, along with partnerships and innovation, will bring redwoods sustainably forward into the century to come.



Our Vision for the Next 125 Years

To guide us on this path, Sempervirens Fund has updated our vision and mission statements, recommitting us to the lasting protection and stewardship of redwoods to ensure their long-term resilience.

Our Mission

Sempervirens Fund's mission is to ensure coast redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains thrive for generations to come.

Our Vision

We envision a future where majestic redwood forests stand resilient, especially in the face of climate change.

Redwood forests protect water, air, and wildlife, and deserve our protection. Through our work we:

- Protect redwood forests and prepare them to better withstand the impacts of climate change.
- Pioneer innovative land management practices that can be replicated for greater impact.
- Expand access to redwood forests, fostering curiosity and a deeper connection to the natural world and to each other.

At Sempervirens Fund, we work with you to secure the future of Santa Cruz Mountain redwoods so we all flourish together.



Strategies, Goals, and Objectives

Strategy One:

Protect

Protect at-risk redwood forests.

We cannot achieve success in our regional conservation goals without first protecting the remaining forests from being carved out, built upon, or paved over. We must move quickly and nimbly to permanently protect redwoods and safeguard forests for future stewardship, restoration, conservation, and sustainable recreation.

Goal

Ensure lasting protection for redwood forests through an accelerated expansion of acquisitions, easements, and other agreements, prioritizing areas that bolster regional climate resilience, protect old-growth redwoods, and create opportunities to enhance natural resources such as watersheds and habitat for endangered species.

Objectives include:

- Pursue protection with willing landowners of the largest remaining properties and collections of smaller, connected parcels in the Santa Cruz Mountains
- Protect the last 1,000 acres of vulnerable old-growth redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains.
- Partner to develop a shared roadmap for reaching state conservation goals in the region.
- Permanently add lands Sempervirens owns to regional and state parks and conservation areas.

What Success Looks Like:

More than 7,000 acres of redwood forests, including 10 percent or the last remaining unprotected old-growth trees, are permanently protected.



Strategy Two:

Restore

Restore and care for redwood forests to enhance climate resilience.

For redwoods to survive and thrive we must actively manage and steward forests for health and resilience, acre-by-acre. We are expanding our expertise, capacity, and partnerships to ensure the forests we protect can withstand climate change.

Goal

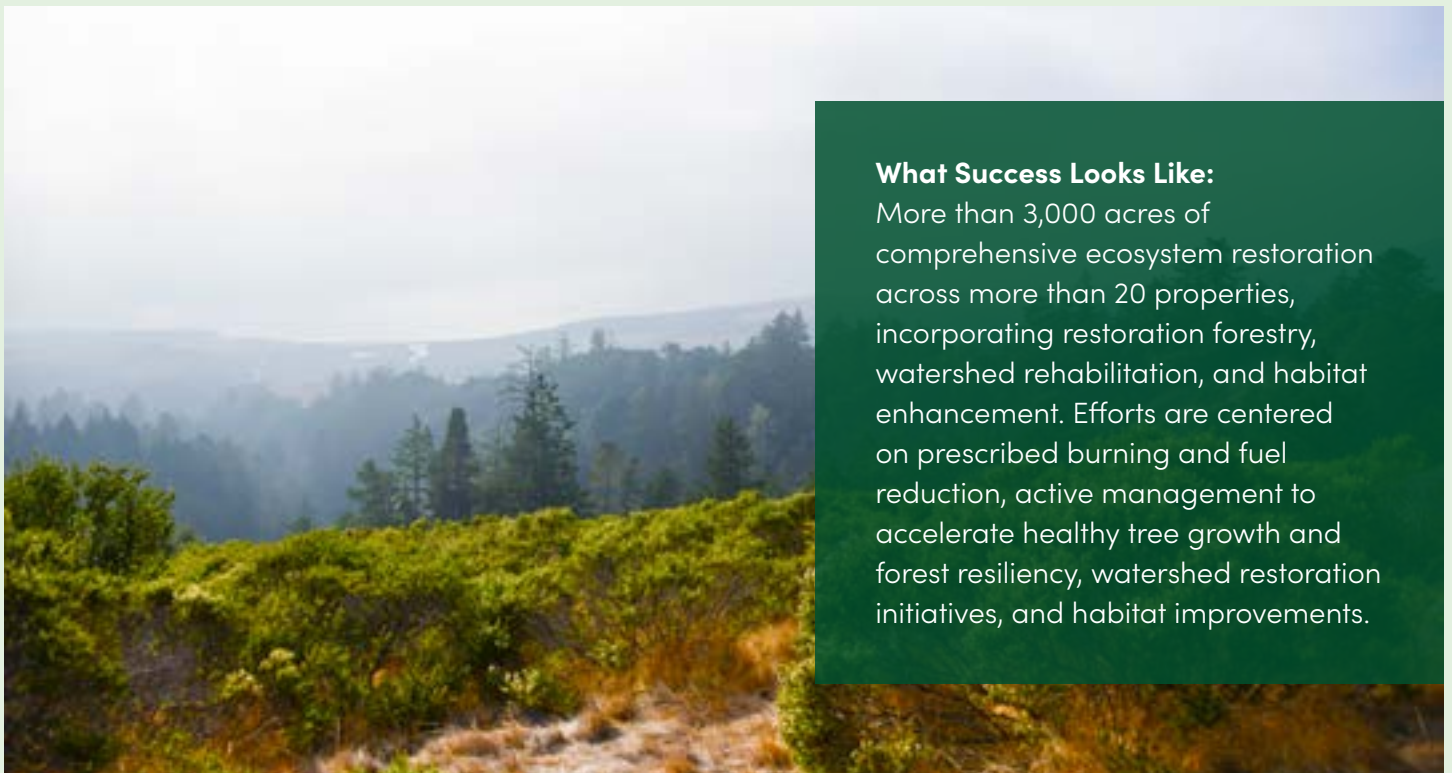
Advance large-scale forest restoration efforts to establish and protect the old-growth of the future, emphasizing restoration forestry, reduction of wildfire risk, watershed renewal, and overall ecosystem resilience. As we do this, we will broaden pathways for people from diverse backgrounds to find a professional home in the conservation field.

Objectives include:

- Galvanize dynamic partnerships to accomplish large-scale forest restoration efforts, which will benefit regional natural systems and serve as demonstration models for efforts elsewhere.
- Responsibly maintain and improve fundamental forest health on Sempervirens-owned properties.
- Advance research efforts that will improve stewardship and land management practices in the region.
- Establish a robust work development program that creates opportunities for students and graduates to work in various fields at Sempervirens Fund.
- Expand partnerships with researchers at the University of California Natural Reserves and other institutions to advance conservation and restoration practices and to support opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to participate in conservation work.

What Success Looks Like:

More than 3,000 acres of comprehensive ecosystem restoration across more than 20 properties, incorporating restoration forestry, watershed rehabilitation, and habitat enhancement. Efforts are centered on prescribed burning and fuel reduction, active management to accelerate healthy tree growth and forest resiliency, watershed restoration initiatives, and habitat improvements.



Strategy Three:**Connect****Connect people to redwoods.**

The futures of people and nature are deeply intertwined, yet there is frequently a disconnect between people and forests. We strive to bridge this gap by connecting people with redwood forests for the mutual benefit of both. We will expand our knowledge and efforts in equitable access and allyship with local Indigenous communities, recognizing that the wellbeing of our region and its redwoods depend on this work.

Goal

Help create and enhance parks, outdoor education camps, and other natural landscapes that allow people to deepen their connections to redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains, prioritizing efforts that support equitable access. We will also continue to ally with local Indigenous people in supporting their relationships with the Earth.

Objectives include:

- Pursue conservation easements for outdoor education camps where important conservation lands also support equitable access.
- Support local land management agencies and community groups in the region to pursue improved equitable access.
- Convene and ally with regional Tribal leaders to support their priorities for access to and ownership of lands lost in their forced removal.

What Success Looks Like:

More than 500 acres of camp lands protected, serving thousands of people with permanent access to outdoor educational experiences. Clarify and implement ways that Sempervirens Fund can support tribes and community groups with their priorities for equitable access to ancestral lands and parks.



Strategy Four:

Advance

Galvanize public and political support to advance conservation policies.

Our regional conservation goals depend on the support of our communities and institutions. We will increase our efforts to raise awareness about the urgent need to support redwoods, deepening our partnerships and collaborating with networks to maximize our collective impact and achieve meaningful regional change.

Goal

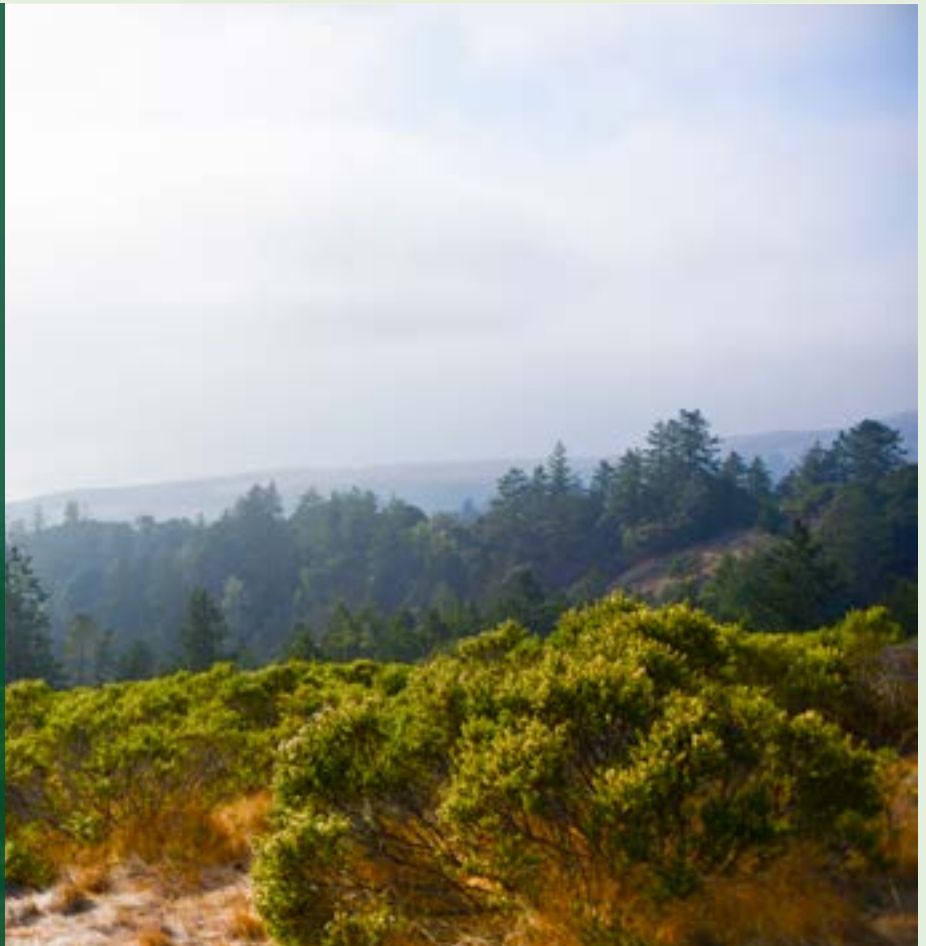
Develop and pursue policy efforts that advance the long-term resilience of redwood forests in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Objectives include:

- Increase the amount of public funding available to support land transactions and stewardship work in our region.
- Strengthen State Parks' capacity to add new lands to the system and increase funding to better steward forests in their care.
- Promote policies that will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires and advance watershed health.
- Defend against policies and land-use decisions that threaten forest resilience.
- Advance equitable access.

What Success Looks Like:

More than \$10 billion in regional and statewide funding sources is available for advancing conservation, climate resiliency, restoration, land acquisition, state park expansion and management, and clean water in the Santa Cruz Mountains.



How We Get There

Grow organizational capacity and culture

For this plan to be successful we must also grow our capacity and culture and secure the funds needed to deliver on this plan's goals. We must invest in ourselves to achieve our strategic priorities and long-term vision. We will grow our expertise, capacity, and learning to ensure we are well-prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

In order to build the team necessary to achieve our goals we must:

- Expand and diversify our staff and contractors and broaden the scope of in-house expertise to advance our strategic goals.
- Cultivate an organizational culture that values diverse perspectives, centers employee wellbeing, and adapts through innovation.
- Establish sustainable funding and new grant revenue sources for our work, including for conservation easement monitoring and long-term management of large conservation properties.
- Diversify the Board to align governance expertise, skill sets, and lived experiences and perspectives with our strategic goals.

This approach to growth will sustain a healthful and supportive work culture, while elevating the professional expertise of our staff and board to meet the ambitions, range, and potential of this strategic plan and beyond.

Join us: sempervirens.org

Thank you to the redwood heroes, partners, and supporters who have stood with us for 125 years, and who are forging the path forward for the next century of resilient redwood forests.

Photos and Illustrations:
Canopy Dynamics, I. Bornarth, C. Lipkin, D. Nguyen,
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