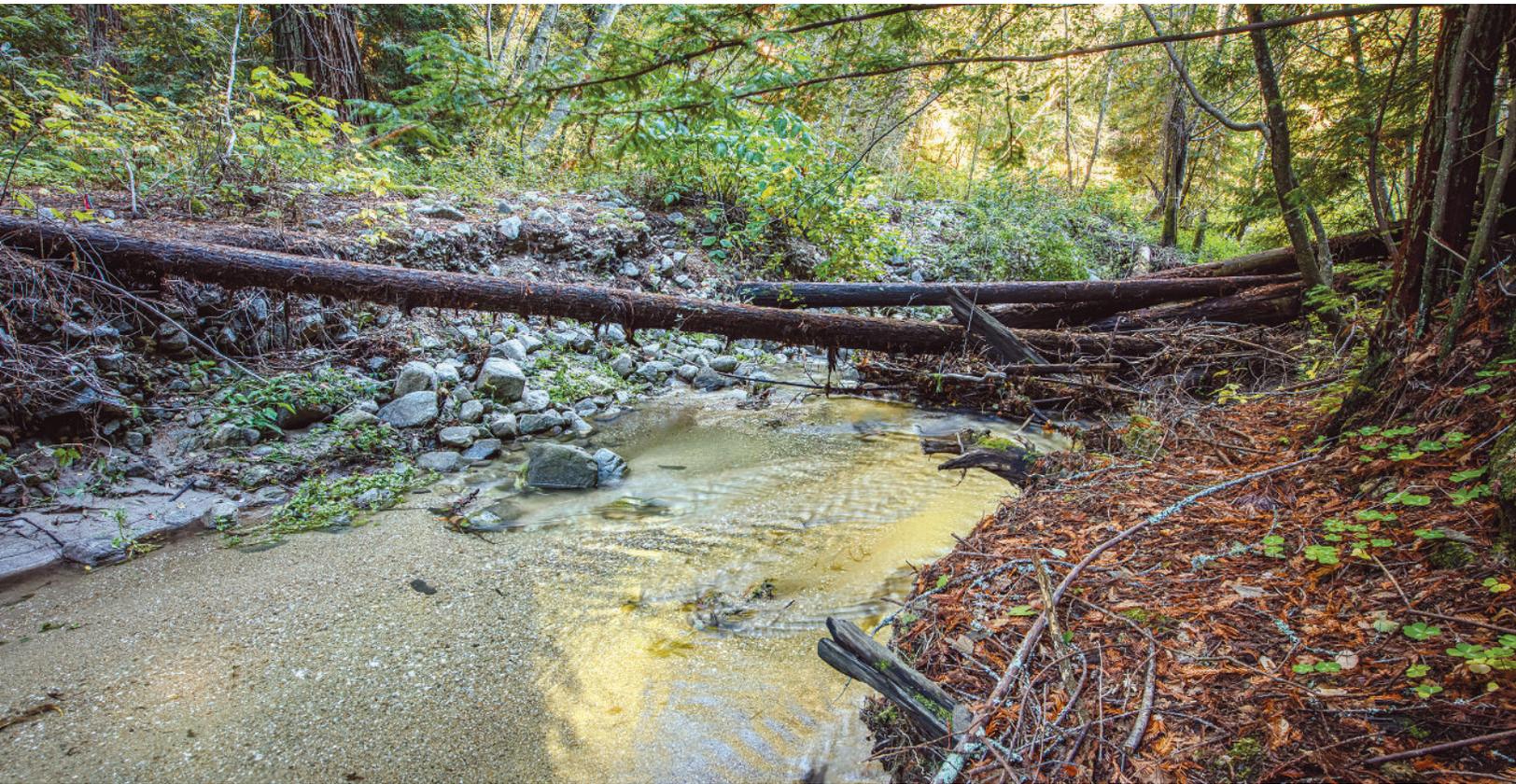


# Mountain Echo

THE NEWSLETTER OF SEMPERVIRENS FUND | WINTER 2026



## Monumental Milestone for Mill Creek

On a warm day in late summer 2025, when the water level was at its lowest, our stewardship team guided three felled trees into a bend of Mill Creek, in the upper reaches of the San Vicente Creek watershed. Set into place, the logs slow rushing water, carve deeper pools, and create sheltered pockets where fish rest. This kind of *tree placement*, known as large woody debris, is one of the most effective ways to restore stream habitat, and it plays a critical role in helping salmonids survive California's increasingly extreme seasons.

The work took place in the upper reaches of San Vicente Creek, where forested headwaters shape everything downstream. Adding trees increases the creek complexity, cooling slower-water refuges that juvenile coho salmon and steelhead trout need

to lay their eggs and grow strong enough to make their journeys to the ocean, and back again.

While placing trees is the most visible moment, it's one chapter in a much longer story. For over a decade, our team has been restoring this watershed step by step: placing step pools in Upper Jim Creek, removing an invasive plant species that was choking out the tree canopy, removing barriers to fish passage, then rebuilding natural stream function, reducing erosion from legacy roads, and maintaining culverts and drainage systems before and during storm season. Together, these actions help the creek recover more quickly after droughts, floods, and wildfire impacts. That long-term commitment is already showing results. *Continued on page 3.*



## Sounds of the Forest

In a redwood grove, sound behaves differently. It lingers. It travels slowly. It hides in places you don't think to listen for.

That is what drew us at Sempervirens to partner with sound recordist Thomas Rex Beverly, to capture the sounds of an old-growth valley, where some trees have been growing for more than a thousand years. The goal wasn't to produce what visitors usually hear on a trail, but something closer to what the redwood trees themselves might "hear."

Thomas was able to ascend into the canopy and place microphones at multiple heights along a single tree and across the valley. From the forest floor to high above the understory, each position revealed how the same moment can sound entirely different, depending on where you are. Wildlife appeared and disappeared, depending on elevation. Even silence had texture. The resulting project, *Sounds of the Forest*, invites listeners into those layered perspectives.

And now you can hear some of these special recordings yourself. As you move through the experience, short sound bites unfold across the day, each pairing forest imagery with layered audio

that shifts subtly as you listen. Wind moves through needles. Birds call across distances. Night arrives gradually, bringing new voices into the valley. Each soundscape reveals a different micro-world, reminding us that these forests are not still or silent, but alive with slow, interconnected motion.

*Sounds of the Forest* is designed to be heard, shared, and returned to when you need a pause. For those who know the redwoods well, it offers a new way of noticing what's easy to miss on the trail. For those who can't visit as often, it's a meaningful way to stay connected to a place protected through collective care.

Tune in to redwoods: [sounds.sempervirens.org](https://sounds.sempervirens.org)

### Showing Up, All Year Long

Forest Sustainers make sure the work to protect redwoods endures, through every season.

Donate monthly:  
[sempervirens.org/forest-sustainers](https://sempervirens.org/forest-sustainers)

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After the removal of a century-old dam on Mill Creek in 2021, winter storms reshaped the channel, moving sediment that had been trapped for generations. Within a year, coho salmon returned. Since then, continued habitat improvements—including this summer’s tree placement—have expanded the areas where fish can shelter, feed, and spawn.

Healthy creeks don’t just benefit fish. Because streams and forests are inseparable when water flows naturally through shaded channels, creeks support amphibians, insects, birds, and the redwood forest itself. Fallen trees stabilize banks and slow erosion; cooler water protects species

sensitive to rising temperatures. Each piece is connected, from the smallest macroinvertebrate to the towering redwoods overhead.

When winter rains return, the trees placed that summer might partially disappear beneath fast water. Pools will deepen. Sediment will shift. Small fish will gather where the current softens. Nothing about it will look grandiose—it is all a bit messy, and that’s the point. This is how a creek remembers how to be a creek, and how a forest quietly makes room for all the life that depends on it.

Explore how our stewardship connects forests to the sea: [sempervirens.org/creek-to-sea](https://sempervirens.org/creek-to-sea)

## A Family’s Connection to Redwoods



“Don” Sherer, loved redwoods deeply, and that affection influenced where he lived and how he gave his time. Don served as both a board member and president of Sempervirens Fund for many years, demonstrating a lasting commitment to protecting redwood lands while contributing his legal expertise to broader conservation efforts. Alex’s mother, Ruth Sherer, has also supported Sempervirens by helping protect redwood forests such as Big Basin and dedicating two trees to loved ones. That legacy of care continues through Alex’s own support.

Alex Sherer grew up near Los Gatos on Summit Road, where his family’s house backed up to a redwood forest. He and his friends spent summers outside, moving through the canyons and woods of the Santa Cruz Mountains behind their neighbors’ homes. The redwoods were part of daily life, and he remembers one practical fact that says as much about their height as any photograph: “There was no climbing redwood trees.” Alex still laughs at the small experiments he and his friends participated in outdoors, such as lying still in a field to see whether they could fool vultures.

Alex’s support for Sempervirens Fund is also shaped by his family history. His father, Dunham

Alex values the way land trusts like Sempervirens build climate resilience, noting that redwoods are “champions,” but he is candid about what matters most to him: “This is more of a heritage and emotional connection than anything else.” Recently, he visited Castle Rock State Park to find a tree dedicated in his father’s name. Using GPS coordinates, he hiked down toward a creek and located it. The visit offered a direct reminder that redwoods outlast individual lives and that care for them can carry forward.

**Stand with Alex in protecting redwood forests today and for generations to come.** Find the giving option that suits you: [sempervirens.org/support](https://sempervirens.org/support)

# Under the Redwoods (Recast)

## Featuring Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson



Because of your support, Sempervirens Fund can pair on-the-ground conservation with public learning that deepens understanding and invites more people into climate leadership. One way we do that is through *Under the Redwoods*, our webinar series that brings together thoughtful voices to explore the science, values, and lived experience behind protecting, caring for, and connecting with redwoods.

This winter, we are sharing a recast episode featuring Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, a marine biologist, policy expert, teacher, and author of the *New York Times* bestseller *What If We Get It Right?: Visions of Climate Futures*.

In this conversation, Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and host Lisa Landers explore what it could look like to meet the climate crisis with clear eyes while

still making room for beauty. Dr. Johnson reminds us of two important truths: that, while the future is being built every day, much of what will shape it has not yet been built—and that implementing a climate strategy together is a huge challenge. That is why she emphasizes solutions we already have and the importance of collaboration. “Co-” is not just a prefix, but a practice.

Sustaining this work takes community, imagination, and a little joy to stretch our sense of what is possible. If you have ever wondered where you fit in, this conversation is an invitation to reconnect with your “why,” and to imagine what protecting landscapes like the redwoods can look like when we do this work together—and get it right.

Watch the conversation: [sempervirens.org/ayana](https://sempervirens.org/ayana)



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