



Preserving redwood forests
since 1900

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Virginia Matzek, Ph.D.
Lisa Micheli, Ph.D.
Scott Stephens, Ph.D.
Chris Wilmers, Ph.D.

June 24, 2026

California State Park and Recreation Commission
c/o SPR.commission@parks.ca.gov

**Re: Support for the Big Basin Redwoods State Park General Plan
Amendment and Certification of the Supplemental Environmental Impact
Report for the Reimagining Big Basin Redwoods State Park Facilities
Management Plan**

Dear Members of the California State Park and Recreation Commission:

On behalf of Sempervirens Fund, California's oldest land trust, I write to express our strong support for the proposed Big Basin Redwoods State Park General Plan Amendment and the certification of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Reimagining Big Basin Redwoods State Park Facilities Management Plan. We respectfully urge the Commission to approve both at the July 2, 2026 hearing.

Our Partnership and Role in This Plan

Sempervirens Fund helped establish Big Basin Redwoods State Park in 1902 and has worked alongside California State Parks for over 125 years to protect, expand, and restore this irreplaceable landscape. Following the catastrophic 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire, which burned 97 percent of the park and destroyed nearly all park facilities, Sempervirens Fund staff participated as members of the Facilities Management Plan advisory team. We helped provide expertise and input around practical solutions for redeveloping Big Basin to become a park for the future while maintaining its timeless appeal.

Why This Plan Deserves Approval

The Facilities Management Plan represents the best thinking of State Parks planners, conservation partners, Indigenous communities, and the public. After years of visioning, public engagement on design alternatives, and rigorous environmental review, the plan achieves an ambitious set of goals that we believe will serve both the forest and the public for generations to come. We highlight several strengths:

- **Prioritizing Forest Health.** The plan's most significant innovation is relocating intensive visitor facilities (campgrounds, parking, and operational infrastructure) out of the heart of the old-growth redwood forest. Former campgrounds in the most ecologically sensitive areas of Blooms Creek, Sempervirens, and Wastahi will be removed and restored



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to old-growth habitat. This is a bold, science-informed decision that prioritizes forest stewardship above all else.

- **Thoughtful Facility Design.** The new Saddle Mountain visitor center and headquarters will serve as the primary gateway to the park, concentrating visitor services, shuttle parking, and staff housing in a location that reduces impacts on sensitive resources while improving the overall arrival experience. The Main Day-Use Area at the former headquarters site will be redesigned as an ecologically sensitive hub with reduced paving and buildings, emphasizing hydrological restoration and forest interpretation.
- **Innovative Transportation.** The shuttle program is central to the plan's success and reflects forward-thinking park management. By reducing private vehicle traffic through the park core, the shuttle will lower emissions, reduce congestion, improve visitor safety, and minimize disturbance to wildlife, including the endangered marbled murrelet.
- **Equitable Access and Inclusive Design.** The plan expands the diversity of overnight accommodations, from tent camping and cabins to ADA-accessible sites, walk-in sites, and group camps, ensuring that Big Basin is welcoming and accessible to visitors of all backgrounds and abilities.
- **Honoring Indigenous Perspectives.** The inclusion of a cultural center and tribal gathering spaces at Little Basin, developed in collaboration with Indigenous communities, reflects a meaningful commitment to integrating Indigenous stewardship and cultural practices into the future of the park.
- **Climate Resilience and Emergency Preparedness.** The plan incorporates resilient design principles, improved emergency response and evacuation planning, and an early warning system, all critical considerations in a landscape shaped by wildfire.

A Thorough and Transparent Process

The Facilities Management Plan and Supplemental EIR were developed through an extensive, multi-year public process. State Parks released design alternatives for public input in 2024, held public open houses and webinars, circulated a Notice of Preparation in June 2025, and provided a 45-day public comment period on the Draft Supplemental EIR from October 17 to December 1, 2025. The Final EIR includes copies of all comments received and responses to those comments. We believe the environmental review has been thorough and meets the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.



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Sempervirens Fund's Commitment

To support implementation of this plan, Sempervirens Fund has already acquired multiple properties adjacent to Big Basin - including the 153-acre Norabella/Gateway property at Saddle Mountain - and is in the process of transferring them to State Parks to enable the facilities envisioned in the plan. We were thrilled to complete the sale of the Norabella property to California State Parks earlier this year. We are also actively partnering with State Parks on trail restoration, including funding the reconstruction of the Timms Creek Loop Trail along the Skyline-to-the-Sea corridor. We look forward to deepening our partnership as implementation moves forward.

Big Basin Redwoods State Park is California's first state park and one of the most beloved public landscapes in the state. The Facilities Management Plan charts a thoughtful, responsible path to rebuild the park in a way that puts the health of the old-growth redwood forest first, welcomes all Californians, and sets a new standard for climate-resilient park planning. We urge the Commission to approve the General Plan Amendment and certify the Supplemental EIR so that the important work of rebuilding Big Basin can move forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sara Barth
Executive Director