

PRESS RELEASE

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Save the Redwoods League Secures Opportunity to Protect and Restore 1,600+ Acres of Redwood Forest and Coastal Prairies from Threat of Development along Sonoma Coast

Nonprofit seeks to raise \$16 million by December 31 to acquire and restore mature second-growth redwoods in Sonoma County



Sonoma Coast Redwoods. Photo by M3 Creative.

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. (September 12, 2024) — [Save the Redwoods League](#) (League) has secured an opportunity to purchase, permanently protect and restore the 1,624-acre Sonoma Coast Redwoods property, home to significant mature second-growth coast redwood forest, biodiverse coastal prairies, ocean views and opportunities for future public access.

A two-hour drive north from San Francisco, Sonoma Coast Redwoods borders [Fort Ross State Historic Park](#) in Sonoma County and faces a significant threat of residential development. The League has negotiated an agreement to buy the ecologically and culturally significant property from timberland owner Soper Company. The League seeks to raise \$16 million by December 31, 2024, to fund the purchase and restore the forest and the surrounding landscape. This project would advance the League's [vision to double the size of coast redwood forests in parks and reserves](#) to 800,000 acres over the next century. The organization has already protected 12,485 acres (19.5 square miles) in Sonoma County alone.

“Along one of the most scenic coastal routes in the world, the mature redwoods and sweeping ocean views of the Sonoma coastline are at a constant risk for residential development. Sonoma Coast Redwoods is a huge conservation priority for its stunning confluence of conservation values: climate resilient habitat and biodiversity, unmatched scenic beauty and recreational potential, mature redwood forest and thousands of years of Indigenous stewardship,” said **Sam Hodder**, president and CEO of Save the Redwoods League. “With its fire resilience and stable carbon storage, easy access and adjacency to a popular state park, this project directly aligns with the state’s 30x30 conservation goals—if we can permanently protect it.”

What’s at Stake

The Sonoma Coast Redwoods property contains roughly 836 acres of coast redwood forests that were in timber production for over 100 years. This has resulted in second-growth redwood stands of varying ages; most trees are 80 to 100 years old. There are also some remaining old-growth trees as old as 1,000 years. Among other important values, the forest at Sonoma Coast Redwoods is a high conservation priority for its carbon storage and climate benefits. Redwood forests store carbon in their rot-resistant wood for centuries, and young redwoods grow quickly, [storing substantial amounts of carbon](#) in a relatively short period.

There are 2 miles of perennial streams on the property, including at least 0.3 miles of potential habitat for federally listed coho salmon and steelhead. The Sonoma Coast Redwoods acquisition would also connect 7.84 square miles (5,017 acres) of protected wildlife habitat across the area. The property’s extensive coastal prairies, which have long been used for livestock grazing, have enormous restoration potential. California’s coastal prairies are the most species-rich grasslands in North America.

With easy access from Highway 1 and Meyers Grade Road, Sonoma Coast Redwoods faces a significant threat of residential development along a prime stretch of coastline. Acquisition of the Sonoma Coast Redwoods property by the League would ensure permanent protection and restoration of its redwood forest and coastal prairies, maintain the viewshed along California’s iconic coastal highway and prevent harmful development in sensitive habitat. It would also provide a buffer to the redwood forest of the adjacent Fort Ross State Historic Park and offer the opportunity for expanded, ecologically responsible public access along the Sonoma coast including a possible extension of the California Coastal Trail.

Fire Impacts

Much of the Sonoma Coast Redwoods property burned during the Meyers Fire in August 2020, with varying degrees of intensity and impact. A portion of the northern area burned at low severity, which benefitted forest health. However, 300 to 500 acres burned at moderate to high severity. Since the fire, the current landowner, Soper Company, has managed the forest in consultation with the League to promote strong recovery and fire resilience, including planting 105,000 redwood trees.

History of Sonoma Coast Redwoods

Sonoma Coast Redwoods is within the ancestral territory of the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians, and the tribe remains connected to this place. The tribe's present-day reservation, Stewarts Point Rancheria, represents only a small portion of the Kashia ancestral homeland, which extends from the Pacific Ocean, north to the Gualala River, east to the confluence of Dry Creek and south beyond the Russian River to Duncan's Point. For millennia, the Kashia stewarded this land, supporting rich biological diversity and abundance. The arrival of Russian traders and the establishment of a settlement at Fort Ross in 1812 dramatically altered the landscape of this area, which became the site of the first non-Indigenous, commercial logging of redwoods in California.

Soper Company acquired the property in 1980. It was one of the first California timber companies to practice sustainable forestry through ecological stewardship.

Next Steps

The League's immediate goal is to protect the full range of conservation values on the property, including the redwood forest, scenic beauty, recreational potential, cultural significance and climate resilience. Once that is accomplished, the League intends to identify and transfer the property to a permanent conservation steward. In the short term, the League and its partners will work to protect the forest's long-term climate and fire resilience through active restoration that will keep it on the path to becoming old growth in the future.

"This forest presents many exciting restoration opportunities," says **Ben Blom**, the League's director of stewardship and restoration. "With a history of sustainable forestry and a post-fire recovery program already in place, we will see this forest flourish in the coming decades."

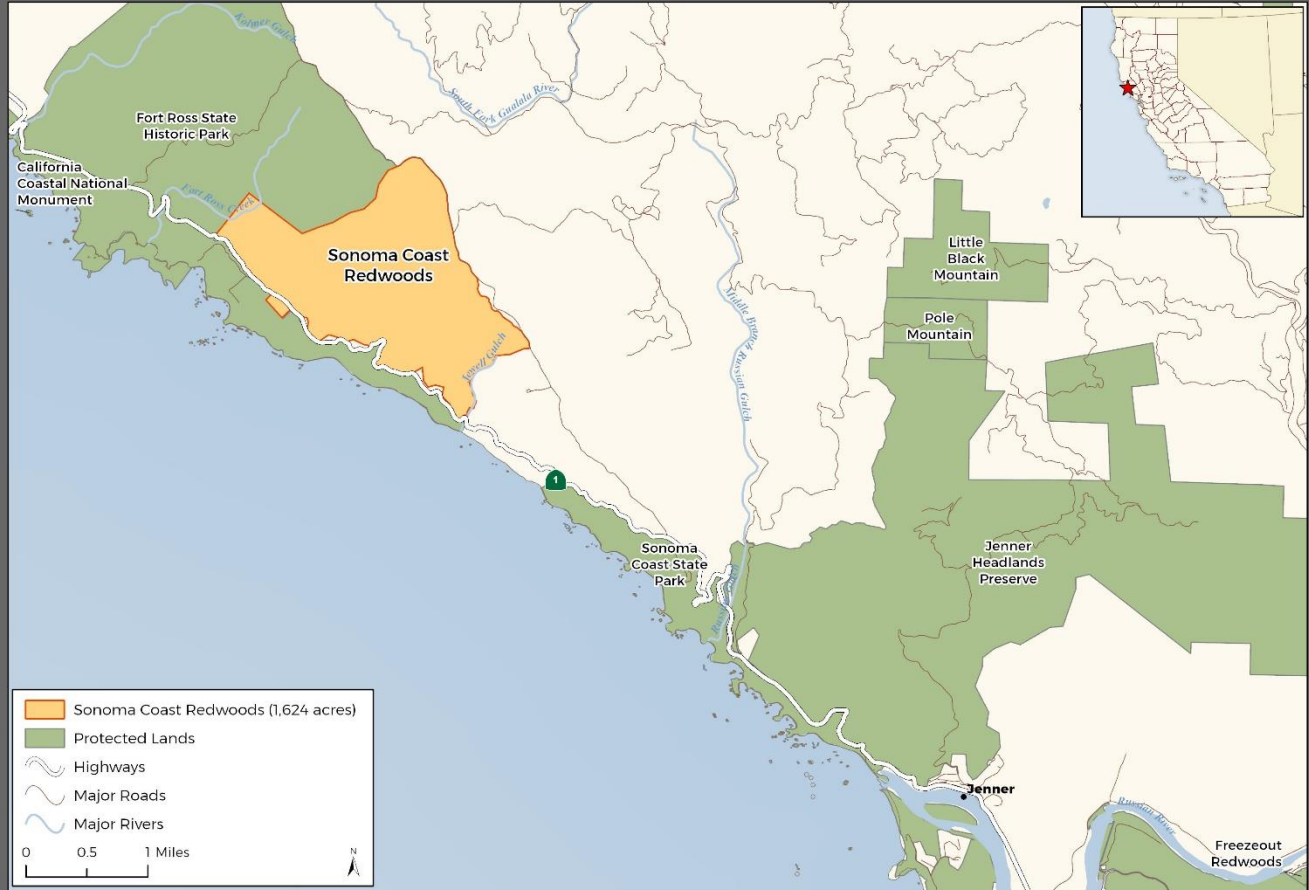
Funding the Protection of Sonoma Coast Redwoods

Save the Redwoods League is pursuing philanthropic gifts, grants and other funding sources toward the total acquisition and stewardship cost of \$16 million. With \$7 million secured to date, the League is seeking to raise \$9 million more by December 31.

Individuals wishing to learn more or to support this effort with a tax-deductible contribution can visit [SaveTheRedwoods.org/SonomaCoastRedwoods](https://www.savetheredwoods.org/SonomaCoastRedwoods).

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Save the Redwoods League

One of the nation's longest-running conservation organizations, Save the Redwoods League has been protecting and restoring redwood forests since 1918. The League has connected generations of visitors with the beauty and serenity of the redwood forests. Our 600,000 supporters have enabled the League to protect more than 220,000 acres of irreplaceable forests in 66 state, national and local parks and reserves. For information, please visit SaveTheRedwoods.org.

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