



PRESS RELEASE

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California State Parks and Save The Redwoods League Unveil New Plan to Safeguard Iconic Redwood Parks in Santa Cruz County

Report outlines actions needed to restore and protect Big Basin Redwoods, Año Nuevo and Butano state parks after CZU Lightning Complex Fire

SANTA CRUZ — [California State Parks](#) and [Save the Redwoods League](#) today released a new [Forest Management Strategy](#) (FMS) aimed at restoring and protecting three state parks in Santa Cruz County following the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire. The devastating wildfire burned through more than 24,000 acres in Big Basin Redwoods, Año Nuevo and Butano state parks. The FMS outlines critical actions needed to help the forests recover and to improve wildfire and climate resilience in the parks and neighboring communities.

“California State Parks is dedicated to revitalizing these unique ecosystems, including our cherished Big Basin Redwoods,” said State Parks Santa Cruz District Superintendent Chris Spohrer. “Our new Forest Management Strategy is a forward-thinking plan that balances ecological restoration with public safety, ensuring these forests can thrive and be enjoyed for generations to come.”

The 135-square-mile CZU Lightning Complex Fire burned through the three state parks and surrounding woodlands in August and September 2020 at a scale and intensity not seen in the Santa Cruz Mountains in several hundred years. The blaze also left behind tens of thousands of standing dead trees and limbs throughout the forest, which pose a safety risk for visitors and may become fuel for another destructive fire and threaten the survival of old-growth redwood forests across the parks.

After an in-depth, multiyear field investigation into the parks’ post-fire recovery, California State Parks, Save the Redwoods League and a broad coalition of partners worked together to develop the FMS plan that addresses these threats.

The main components of the plan are:

- **Ecological Restoration:** By thinning out dense forests, promoting the growth of larger trees and using controlled burns to mimic natural fire patterns, this helps create healthier, more resilient forests. The plan proposes targeted treatments on more than 2,000 acres to open space for more mature trees to flourish. This will reduce fuel for wildfires, limit invasive species and help native plants and animals recover.
- **Collaboration and Community Engagement:** Working jointly with government agencies, local communities, Indigenous groups and conservation organizations best ensures the success of restoration efforts.

The FMS plan is designed to operate as a “living document” that can be updated and amended in response to changing environmental conditions and emerging scientific insights. This approach will ensure that California State Parks can continue to respond effectively to the challenges posed by climate change and other ecological pressures.

“Restoring these parks is about more than just recovery from fire,” said Save the Redwoods League Director of Stewardship and Restoration Ben Blom. “It’s about restoring this forest to make sure it’s able to endure future challenges. These are incredible, beloved parks, and we need to take proactive steps to ensure the health and resilience of the forests for the future.”

The FMS was created in partnership with California State Parks, Save the Redwoods League and Auten Resource Consulting with funding from [Parks California](#) and additional forest restoration expertise provided by the [San Mateo Resource Conservation District](#), California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection ([CAL FIRE](#)) and many foresters and natural resource professionals.

Notes for Visitors:

- As California State Parks moves forward with the FMS plan, you may encounter temporary closures in certain areas of Big Basin Redwoods, Año Nuevo and Butano state parks.
- Visitors may also see restoration activity, which can look different from what you expect. If you see dead or living plant material being removed, do not be alarmed! It is part of the plan to reduce fuel and create space for healthy regeneration.
- [Access to Big Basin Redwoods Headquarters](#) remains open but limited due to extensive fire damage from the CZU Fire, which destroyed much of the park’s infrastructure. California State Parks is leading a [Facilities Management Plan](#) for new and improved facilities at the park.
- Public access to Big Basin Redwoods is now open at Waddell Beach, Rancho del Oso and day-use trails near the park’s headquarters along Highway 236 near Boulder Creek.

- [Año Nuevo State Park](#) is open to the public.
- [Butano State Park](#) is open, but the campgrounds and some trails remain closed.



Left: Big Basin Redwoods State Park along the southern portion of the Westridge Trail. Middle: Año Nuevo State Park to the south of Whitehouse Canyon Road. Right: Butano State Park north of the Butano Fire Road. Photos from: Auten Resource Consulting.

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The California Department of Parks and Recreation, popularly known as State Parks, and the programs supported by its Office of Historic Preservation and divisions of Boating and Waterways and Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation provides for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. Learn more at parks.ca.gov.

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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](https://www.savetheredwoods.org).

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