



**Media Contacts:**  
 Robin Carr, Landis Communications Inc.  
 (415) 971-3991 or [post@landispr.com](mailto:post@landispr.com)

Laura Dannehl-Schickman  
 Land Trust of Santa Cruz County  
 (831) 783-5503 or  
[Laura.Schickman@landtrustsantacruz.org](mailto:Laura.Schickman@landtrustsantacruz.org)

## Construction to Begin on Public Access Trail System at San Vicente Redwoods, Following CZU Wildfire and Pandemic Delays

*Land Trust of Santa Cruz County and conservation partners plan opening of initial 8.5 miles of multi-use trails in fall 2022*

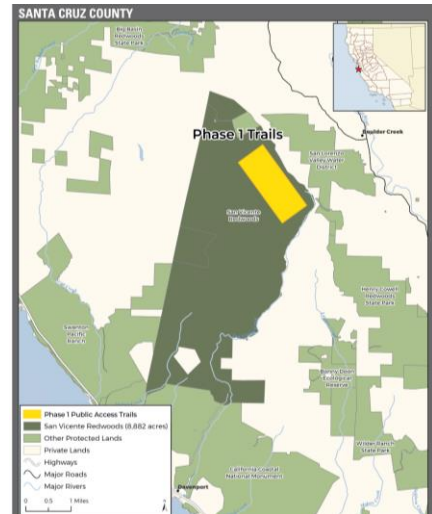
**Davenport, Calif.** (March 9, 2022) – Following extensive environmental studies, public input and two years of delay due to the CZU Lightning Complex wildfire and coronavirus pandemic, the [Land Trust of Santa Cruz County](#) (LTSCC) will begin construction on the first phase of an envisioned 38-mile multi-use trail system at San Vicente Redwoods in April.

An initial set of 8.5 miles of trails for use by hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians, is planned to open in the fall.

Last December, four Bay Area-based nonprofit organizations [commemorated 10 years of collaborative conservation and restoration](#) of the 8,852-acre San Vicente Redwoods property. [Peninsula Open Space Trust \(POST\)](#) and [Sempervirens Fund](#) jointly own the property; [Save the Redwoods League](#) holds a permanent conservation easement on the land. LTSCC is developing and will manage the property’s public access trail system.

### Commitment to Responsible Public Access

Public access has been part of the vision for San Vicente Redwoods from the beginning. Wildlife behavior studies like [the Santa Cruz Puma Project](#) have informed trail placement decisions to balance recreation and conservation objectives. The partners also positioned motion-activated wildlife cameras and audio sensors – both near human activity and far from it – to track numerous animal species and to see how they respond to human presence. This ongoing research guided the trail placement and will inform their management to ensure that the needs are met for all – humans and wildlife – who inhabit and use the lands.



*San Vicente Redwoods with approximate location of first trails, opening fall 2022*

"Studies show that bringing people out into wild spaces fosters a close connection to nature and strong desire to take care of the land. Our goal is to do this in a way that does not conflict with the conservation goals of San Vicente Redwoods." said **Sarah Newkirk**, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County executive director. "Our approach to creating public access is adaptive and leads with the science. When the fires rolled through this area, we hit the brakes and assessed the impact to the forest ecosystem, modifying our trail plans in response. We believe it’s important to be transparent with the public when

things change, so everyone understands the ‘why’ behind our decisions and can enjoy the long-term benefits.”

Plans for what will ultimately be a 38-mile trail system at San Vicente Redwoods were created in 2019 and have been revised in response to impacts of the CZU wildfire. Before construction can begin on the first phase, nearly 1,000 burned “hazard” trees are being removed from the trail areas to ensure safety for both building crews and future visitors. Future phases of trail construction are expected to continue over the next three to five years and may include connections to other trail systems in the area, including [those being established this year at the adjacent Cotoni-Coast Dairies](#) unit of the California Coastal National Monument.

“We partners knew from the beginning that the protection and restoration of San Vicente Redwoods would be a long-term project,” said **Walter T. Moore**, president of POST. “Sustainable forest management, research and wildfire resilience are all critical. When combined with the launch of a multi-use trail system that balances the needs of nature and the people of our area, it’s a genuinely exciting step forward for everyone.”

### **Call for Volunteers on Trail Construction**

The first phase of San Vicente Redwoods trails will be built by the professional crew of [Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Stewardship](#) (SCMTS), with support from hundreds of community volunteers. SCMTS will host regular volunteer trail work events, ranging from small-scale weekday drop-in trail work to “Saturdays at San Vicente” work days and large-scale supported [Dig Days](#). More information and sign-ups for all volunteer opportunities are available at SCMTS’s online [events calendar](#).

### **Permanent Protection and Future of San Vicente Redwoods**

The 8,852-acre San Vicente Redwoods is a model of environmental conservation. Most of the area was permanently protected by the conservation partners in 2011 after decades of intensive commercial logging in the last century left much of the forest in an unhealthy state. The threat of development also loomed. A conservation easement covering the property ensures ecologically sensitive land management practices, as well as sustainable harvesting in the working forest areas of the property.

The nonprofit partners are restoring the property’s 912-acre preservation reserve containing some old-growth redwoods; 3,951 acres of the previously logged forest; eight creeks; and a 320-acre former ranch that is home to redwoods, grasslands and oak woodlands. The partners also manage 3,669 acres of working forest to ensure [sustainable timber harvesting](#) and retain forestry jobs. The entire property includes critical habitat for many regionally significant species of wildlife, including endangered Coho salmon, marbled murrelet, pumas and peregrine falcons. Portions of the land boast stands of the threatened Anderson’s manzanita.

The partners also work closely with the [Amah Mutsun Tribal Band](#) (AMTB), and the [Amah Mutsun Land Trust](#) (AMLT), formed in 2013 as a vehicle for tribal members to return as stewards to their land. In collaborating with these two entities, the partners’ goal is to inform current plans with the cultural practices and deep knowledge shared by the Indigenous peoples who stewarded this land for millennia.

### **More information**

Members of the community who wish to support the construction of the San Vicente Redwoods trail system, or who want to sign up for regular e-updates on trail progress and volunteer opportunities, can do so at the [Land Trust of Santa Cruz County website](#).

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**About Land Trust of Santa Cruz County**

The mission of the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County is to protect, care for, and connect people to the extraordinary lands that make this area special. Information is available at [LandTrustSantaCruz.org](http://LandTrustSantaCruz.org)

**About Peninsula Open Space Trust**

POST protects open space on the Peninsula and in the South Bay for the benefit of all. As a private nonprofit land trust, POST has been responsible for conserving more than 80,000 acres since its founding in 1977. POST works with private landowners and public agencies to connect people and nature. Visit [openspacetrust.org](http://openspacetrust.org) for more information.

**About Sempervirens Fund**

California's first land trust, Sempervirens Fund protects and permanently preserves redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) forests, wildlife habitat, watersheds, and other important natural and scenic features of the Santa Cruz Mountains and encourages public appreciation and enjoyment of this environment. [sempervirens.org](http://sempervirens.org)

**About 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 forest. The nonprofit's 29,000 supporters have enabled the organization to protect more than 216,000 acres of irreplaceable forest in 66 state, national and local parks and reserves. For information, please visit [SaveTheRedwoods.org](http://SaveTheRedwoods.org).

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