



Media Contact:

Robin Carr, Landis Communications Inc.

Email: Redwoods@landispr.com | Phone: (415) 971-3991

Douglas Johnson, Information Officer, California State Parks

Email: Douglas.Johnson@parks.ca.gov | Phone: (916) 858-9109

Paul Prescott, President, Calaveras Big Trees Association

Email: prescott@charter.net | Phone: (209) 985-7820

Interpretive Exhibit About the Famed “Tunnel Tree” Giant Sequoia to open in Calaveras Big Trees State Park on Saturday, July 23, 2022



The new display includes a cross-section, or “tree cookie,” from the fallen giant known as the Pioneer Cabin Tree. Photo by Max Whittaker.

Exhibit commemorates 1,233-year-old fallen “tunnel tree”

Calaveras, Calif. (July 21, 2022) – [California State Parks](#), the [Calaveras Big Trees Association](#) and [Save the Redwoods League](#) today announce the opening of the Pioneer’s Cabin Tree interpretive exhibit in the North Grove at Calaveras Big Trees State Park on Saturday, July 23. The display includes an enormous “tree cookie” extracted from the 1,223-year old fallen giant, which toppled in 2017, revealing a fascinating history of fires, drought and injuries, but also telling a story of healing and resilience.

“The new giant sequoia exhibit at [Calaveras Big Trees State Park](#) will truly enhance the entrance to the North Grove Trail and provide a chance for visitors to connect with one of the most famous trees in the park, the Pioneer’s Cabin Tree,” says **Mike Merritt**, California State Parks District Interpretive Manager. “With this exhibit, visitors will have a new way to identify where the trail is, and learn more about giant sequoia trees.”

Standing 205 feet tall and more than 19 feet in diameter, the Pioneer’s Cabin Tree was one of about 150 ancient giant sequoias within the North Grove. The tree was distinguished by its crown, most of which had been shorn off by lightning, and by the distinctive fire scar at its wide base. In the 1880s, the former owners of the North Grove squared off the opening, creating a “tunnel tree” extremely popular with tourists. Thousands of park visitors passed through the Pioneer’s Cabin Tree on foot and horseback and by carriage and motorcar. But the famous sequoia toppled five years ago, after a period of heavy rain and high winds.

After the tree fell, [Save the Redwoods League](#) worked with [California State Parks](#) and the [Calaveras Big Trees Association](#) to extract and dry a cross-section, or “tree cookie,” so they could learn more about the tree’s long history. Allyson Carroll, a dendrochronologist with Humboldt State University, has analyzed the section, identifying key events in the tree’s life and matching years with specific tree rings. The information will help California State Parks

better understand the dynamic changes these ancient trees have experienced and will inform the management of existing groves of giant sequoias—a task made more urgent in the face of climate change.



Analysts from Humboldt State University have studied the cross-section (or "tree-cookie") to learn more about the history of the Pioneer Cabin Tree. Photo by Max Whittaker.

“Save the Redwoods League, in collaboration with several agencies and organizations, is actively working to reintroduce fire to these forests and protect the giant sequoia on a landscape scale,” says **Deborah Zierten**, education & interpretation manager for Save the Redwoods League. “The preservation and interpretation of a cross-section from this iconic tree helps showcase the importance of giant sequoias, especially at a time when they are under such threat from wildfire and climate change.”

The "cookie" and two interpretive panels are displayed at a kiosk next to the visitor's center at Calaveras Big Trees State Park, at the North Grove trailhead. A third interpretive panel is displayed next to the Pioneer's Cabin Tree itself, which, though fallen, remains an important part of the forest ecosystem. The work was funded by Save the Redwoods League, the Calaveras Big Trees Association and private donations.

“CBTA is grateful to Save the Redwoods League and California State Parks for studying the fallen Pioneer's Cabin Tree and preparing this display,” says **Paul Prescott**, president of the Calaveras Big Trees Association. “When the beloved monarch fell in 2017, we heard from hundreds of people all around the world. Their letters and pictures told stories about how the Pioneer's Cabin Tree had been part of their life experience. Thanks to our partners, thousands more will now learn about this friend that is fallen, but not forgotten.”

* * *

For more information or to schedule an interview, contact Robin Carr at (415) 971-3991 or redwoods@landispr.com.



California State Parks Mission

California State Parks mission is to provide 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. Visit parks.ca.gov



Calaveras Big Trees Association

Founded in 1974, Calaveras Big Trees Association is a private, non-profit, charitable 501(c)(3) corporation whose mission is to create, fund and deliver inspirational educational and interpretive programs, as well as inspire visitors to help preserve and protect the giant sequoias and all of Calaveras Big Trees State Park's natural resources. Visit bigtrees.org.



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 members have enabled the organization to protect more than 216,000 acres of irreplaceable forests in 66 state, national and local parks and reserves. For information, please visit SaveTheRedwoods.org.

###