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## Save the Redwoods League Protects 3,862-Acre Weger Ranch in Mendocino County

*Conservation easement on redwood ranch protects sustainably managed forestland adjacent to iconic Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve*



Weger Ranch in Mendocino County, California. Photo by Max Forster, @maxforsterphotography.

**San Francisco, Calif.** (August 22, 2023) — [Save the Redwoods League](#) today announced that it has secured a conservation easement on the 3,862-acre Weger Ranch, safeguarding its coast redwood and Douglas-fir forest. The easement protects this expansive Mendocino County ranch from subdivision, development and excessive logging in perpetuity. The deal also ensures that the property will remain as a sustainable working forest buffering Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve.

“California’s bold plans for climate action and leadership depend on the success of conservation projects like Weger Ranch,” said **Sam Hodder**, president and CEO of Save the Redwoods League. “The state’s nature-based solutions to climate change include investing in sustainable management of commercial redwood forests and protecting those forests from subdivision and development to better sustain habitat, carbon capacity and climate resilience.”

The League has now protected more than 64 square miles (40,974 acres) in Mendocino County. These lands are in some of the area's most-loved parks, including Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve, Mendocino Headlands, Sinkyone Wilderness, Navarro River Redwoods and Hendy Woods state parks. The League purchased the 453-acre [Atkins Place](#) property in 2022 and the 3,181-acre [Lost Coast Redwoods](#) property in 2021. It also donated a 523-acre redwood forest known as [Tc'ih-Léh-Dũñ](#) to the InterTribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council, returning Indigenous guardianship to the land, in 2022.

"To protect life around the world and combat climate change, we must work together to conserve nature," said **Jennifer Norris, Ph.D.**, the deputy secretary for biodiversity and habitat, California Natural Resources Agency. "California is leading the way to protect 30% of its lands and coastal waters by 2030 with critical support from nonprofit partners, including Save the Redwoods League. We are excited to see the protection of Weger Ranch, adding to the network of protected redwood forestland in Northern California."

Weger Ranch has more than 3,000 acres of mixed-conifer forest, with nearly 400 old-growth trees throughout the property. The ranch also contains the headwaters of seven tributary streams, all of which drain into Big River, a critical coastal watershed for imperiled salmonid species. The ranch has 2.75 miles of steelhead and coho salmon streams, including 1 mile of chinook salmon streams. The land also provides habitat for northern spotted owls and foothill yellow-legged frogs, federally threatened and special-status species, respectively. Goshawks, white-tailed kites, peregrine falcons, golden eagles and red tree voles, as well as bears and mountain lions, also are present.

A key provision in the conservation easement reduces the total number of legal parcels on the property from 37 to three, eliminating the possibility that this land will be sold off piecemeal for development. The easement also establishes 62 acres of reserve areas where the forest will be allowed to return to old-growth condition.

Weger Ranch was acquired by Donald Weger over the course of 25 years, beginning in 1941. For the past three decades, the owners have set a high bar for forest management in the region. The family's selective "light-touch" harvesting approach results in a multi-aged, diverse forest structure that benefits streams and wildlife. These practices will continue under the conservation easement, along with additional restrictions in riparian zones and protection of all residual old-growth trees.

"The protections and sustainable harvests under this easement will ensure that the forest can continue to develop and thrive," said **Joanna Nelson, Ph.D.**, director of science and conservation planning for the League. "The wild abundance of life in these forests is thrilling to see with salmon, mammals and birds, from raptors to songbirds. This collaboration will protect not only biodiversity, but also water and carbon-storage functions of the soil and forest."

## Montgomery Woods Initiative

The completion of the Weger Ranch easement is the latest accomplishment in the League's [Montgomery Woods Initiative](#) to enhance the old-growth coast redwood forest and visitor amenities of Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve.

In addition to conserving Weger Ranch, which shares a 1.25-mile border with the reserve, the League also protected the adjacent 453-acre [Atkins Place](#) property in 2022 as a future fee addition to Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve. Together, these properties form a protected greenbelt of more than 11,500 acres in the upper reaches of the Big River watershed.

The League is also working in partnership with California State Parks to improve the trail network within the reserve. Over the next three years, the partners will reconstruct and expand the perimeter loop trail; create an immersive old-growth grove path that brings visitors to the valley floor; and build new features including gathering areas, a bridge overlooking Montgomery Creek and inclusive interpretive exhibits. The partners also will restore areas where extensive social trails have damaged the ecosystem.

## Funding the Conservation of Weger Ranch

The Weger Ranch conservation easement was made possible by the generous support of Save the Redwoods League donors and through a \$9.5 million grant from the Cal Fire Forest Legacy Program; a \$3.42 million grant from California State Coastal Conservancy; a \$1.121 million land value donation from the Weger family; and \$250,000 from Walmart's Acres for America program through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

[Learn more](#) about Weger Ranch on the Save the Redwoods League website.

To access hi-res images and b-roll, please [visit the League's online newsroom](#).



### 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 400,000 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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