

Soquel Demonstration State Forest

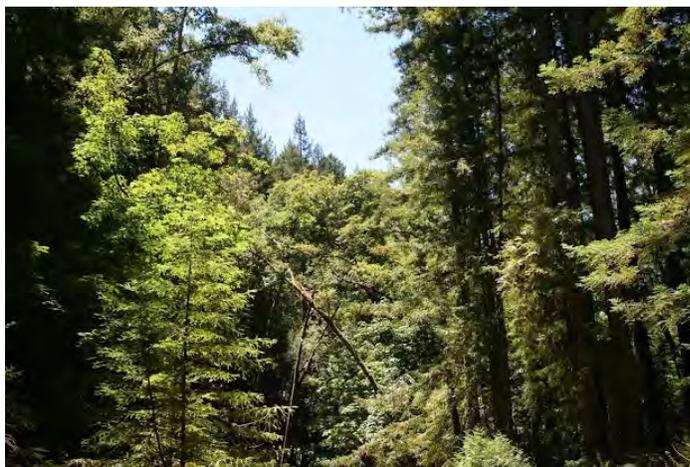
Summer 2014 Newsletter



Welcome to the SDSF Newsletter!

Whether you're familiar with the Soquel Demonstration State Forest (SDSF), or you've never been, we hope you find something to capture your interest in the next few pages. We've had an action-packed summer here in our neck of the woods.

SDSF is a State Forest managed by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), located in the beautiful Soquel hills near Santa Cruz. It contains 2700 acres of redwood, mixed hardwoods, riparian, and chaparral ecosystems. The East Branch of Soquel Creek and parts of Amaya and Fern Gulch Creeks flow through this working forest. Read on to learn what's happening on the ground here at SDSF.



What's a State Forest?

Demonstration State Forests (DSF) are parcels of timberlands purchased by the State of California and administered by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). These forests are used primarily for the demonstration of sustained-yield timber management, education, research, and recreation. The DSFs are healthy, active, living forests providing a variety of benefits. The forests' uses conserve and protect wildlife, fisheries, vegetation, soil, watershed, and aesthetic values.

Fun facts about the Forest:

- SDSF, dedicated in 1990, is the first state forest to be added to the system since 1949
- The East Branch of Soquel Creek, which flows through SDSF, is the southernmost portion of Coho Salmon habitat range
- The epicenter of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake is approximately two miles south of the Forest, in the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park

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Comstock Mill Timber Harvest

Timber is falling in the Forest! SDSF plans to harvest close to two million board feet of redwood and Douglas-fir in the Comstock Mill Timber Harvest. Big Creek Lumber Company, based in Davenport, was contracted for the logging job.

As a working forest, we are proud to demonstrate sustainable logging practices to the public,



ensuring the protection of the watershed and the integrity of the beautiful ecosystem we get to work and play in. You won't find many forests where logging and recreation coexist so closely.

All state forests are financially self-sustaining. Our harvests supply the revenue used to fund projects aimed to improve the forest, like shaded fuel breaks and stream restoration.

Riding the Flow



Mountain bikers gather for the opening of Segments 3 and 5 of the Flow Trail.

SDSF has long been known as a mountain biking destination, thanks to partnerships between the Forest and the local mountain biking community.

After a series of trail work days this past winter, Segments 3 and 5 of the Flow Trail opened in June 2014 with much anticipation and excitement. These segments weave in and out of Tractor Trail, providing a slightly gentler option for more novice riders. Other segments will begin construction next year, so more trail work days await. SDSF welcomes the public to come ride the flow!

"The redwoods, once seen, leave a mark or create a vision that stays with you always. No one has ever successfully painted or photographed a redwood tree. The feeling they produce is not transferable. From them comes silence and awe. It's not only their unbelievable stature, nor the color which seems to shift and vary under your eyes, no, they are not like any trees we know, they are ambassadors from another time." - John Steinbeck

A Fish-Friendly Fix

This summer, SDSF completed an innovative and unprecedented road repair project. A short section of the Soquel Creek stream bank along Hihn's Mill Road has been eroding in recent years, posing a risk to both the watershed and the safety of the road.

Rather than utilize a traditional method, forest managers worked with geologist Steve Reynolds (California Geological Survey) to design a fish-friendly repair. Reynolds was also contracted to complete a series of large woody debris installations in the creek in 2012 and 2013.

Under Reynolds' direction and the supervision of aquatic biologists, nine redwood rootwads were installed into the bank, which serve the dual purpose of protecting the

road and creating pools and eddies for fish and frog habitat.

The Soquel Creek watershed is home to a number of aquatic fish and amphibians, some of which are threatened with extinction. Coho salmon were observed in the East Branch of Soquel Creek as recently as 2008, the southernmost that this endangered species has been found. Threatened steelhead fish are a common species in the creek, and it's not too hard to find yellow-legged frogs jumping around the bank. Rough-skinned and California newts can also be seen wriggling in the pebbles of the creek.



SDSF is doing what it can to improve habitat for these critters and maintain the health of this important watershed. This stream bank repair project will hopefully pave the way for more projects of its kind, to actively restore watercourses that humans have damaged in the past while ensuring the safety and stability of our forest roads.

Visitors to the Forest can find more information about LWD projects in the info box at the bottom of Sawpit Trail.

"To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering." - Aldo Leopold



Nine rootwads installed in the Soquel Creek stream bank along Hihn's Mill Road. Above the rock wall, the bank will be slashed and planted with willows and redwood seedlings.

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SDSF Staff: Summer 2014



From left to right: Assistant Forest Manager Colin Noyes, Forestry Aide Meredith Jacobson, Forestry Aide Julie Dufresne, Forest Manager Angela Bernheisel, Office Technician Anna Cameron

http://calfire.ca.gov/resource_mgmt/resource_mgmt_stateforests_soquel.php

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Shaded Fuel Break

We all know fire season has been especially bad in the recent drought, and is likely to get worse in coming years as climate change intensifies. It's more important than ever for landowners to be prepared, and the Forest is no exception.

Last summer, operations began on a shaded fuel break along Hihn's Mill Road, the main throughway in the Forest used for administration and emergency access. Operations carried on this summer, thanks to continued grant funding

Before



After



from CAL FIRE's Vegetation Management Program. Inmate crews from Ben Lomond Conservation Camp were used for the project, to cut and chip small woody material and decrease surface fuels within fifty feet of the road's edge.

While we've still got a ways to go to complete construction along all sections of Forest roads, we've made great progress in making the Forest more defensible to wildfire.

Visitors to the Forest can find handouts about our shaded fuel break in the info box at the public entrance on Hihn's Mill Road.