

PRESS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Divisions of Boating and Waterways, Historic Preservation and Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation

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Big Basin Redwoods State Park Reopens July 22 with Reservation-Only Day-Use Access

*Limited public access to the fire-scarred park returns almost two years after
CZU Fire*

BOULDER CREEK, Calif. — California State Parks and Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks today announced Big Basin Redwoods State Park will partially reopen July 22 for limited day-use access through a reservation system. Reservations will be available starting July 1.

Big Basin has been closed to the public since the [CZU Lightning Complex Fire](#) tore through the park in August 2020. Flames engulfed more than 97 percent of the park on August 18, 2020, destroying nearly every structure, including the Park Headquarters, campgrounds and housing for park employees. Approximately 18,000 acres burned inside the park boundary. The park is still without electricity, water, flush toilets, phone service or buildings.

“The changes to Big Basin are profound, but the forest is starting to recover and it’s amazing to witness,” said California State Parks Santa Cruz District Superintendent Chris Spohrer. “We want to share the recovery process with visitors, including telling the story of what happened, the status today and the plans for reimagining the park. We’re excited to be able to welcome visitors back on a limited basis as we near the two-year anniversary of the fire.”

“Managing parks for a healthy future for environmental systems as well as humanity could not be more important at this moment in history,” said California State Parks Director Armando Quintero. “We welcome all Californians and visitors from around the world as we enter the next era for this iconic and much beloved state park.”

Limited Reopening

The day-use-only reservation system will provide public access to a small area of the fire-damaged park. Visitors will be able to explore the Redwood Loop and access about 18 miles of fire roads near the historic park core. Services will be limited.

The public access to Big Basin coincides with the reopening of Highway 236, the main thoroughfare through the park. Once open, drivers may go through the park on Highway 236 without stopping. All parking within the park will be by reservation only. Visitors can also access the park by bicycle or METRO bus route 35, which runs on weekends only, without a reservation.

“We are proud to partner with State Parks to bring the public back to Big Basin,” Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks Executive Director Bonny Hawley said. “The devastation of the CZU Fire reminded all of us how beloved and special this park is to generations of visitors. While it will not look like the same Big Basin visitors remember, we hope visitors will enjoy making new memories during this pivotal time for the park.”

[Friends](#), through its unique position as co-management partner with State Parks, will manage the Big Basin Day-Use Reservation System. Reservations will be available online at [Big Basin Redwoods State Park](#) or by phone (831) 338-8867. Most spaces will be available by up to 60 days in advance, while a limited number of reservations will be released three days before the visit date. Initially, 45 spots will be offered daily. Pre-registration is required. No day-of, drive-up entry will be available. Entry is \$6, plus a \$2 reservation fee, and will provide day-long access to the park. State Parks day-use passes, and other park entry programs will be honored, including the recently expanded Golden Bear Park Pass, which provides free access to State Parks for families receiving CalWORKS benefits and others.

Big Basin’s History and Future

Big Basin is the oldest state park in California. The lands known today as Big Basin Redwoods State Park were originally the homelands of the Quiroste and Cotonni tribes, ancestral relatives of today’s Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. The park was acquired in 1902. Prior to the CZU Fire, the park had miles of trails — which served hikers and equestrians, linking Big Basin to Castle Rock State Park and the eastern reaches of the Santa Cruz range — and hundreds of campsites.

Recovery from the CZU Fire has been happening in phases – for both parks and people. [A 3-D virtual tour of the six locations in the park](#), captured one year after the fire in August 2021, provides an immersive experience at the fire impacts and recovery process. In the 20 months since the fire, most of the fire-scarred old-growth redwoods have been preserved through specialized hazard tree removal work. The Big Basin Volunteer Trail Crew, Trails Center volunteers, California Conservation Corps and park volunteers have repaired trails in the park prior to the reopening.

California State Parks has been engaging stakeholders and the public to [reimagine the future of Big Basin Redwoods State Park](#) over the past several months. The process for reestablishing the park includes immediate recovery efforts, reimagining efforts to renew the

vision for the park's future, and long-term planning and implementation projects. The public can read the draft [Reimagining Big Basin Vision Summary here](#).

Support from State Park Partners to Reimagine Big Basin

- **Mountain Parks Foundation**

"The partial reopening of Big Basin is an important milestone after the devastation of the CZU Fire. As we slowly return to the park, we can draw strength and inspiration from witnessing the resilience of the redwoods and marvel at nature's ability to heal and flourish once again," said Brenda Holmes, Executive Director of the Mountain Parks Foundation.

- **Parks California**

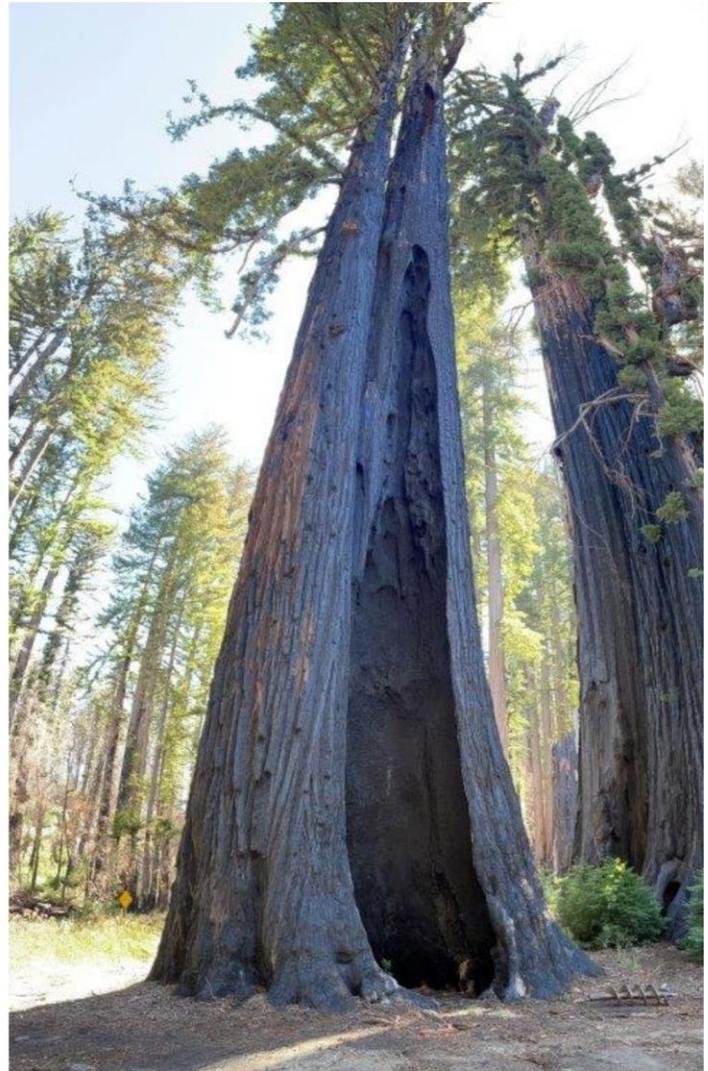
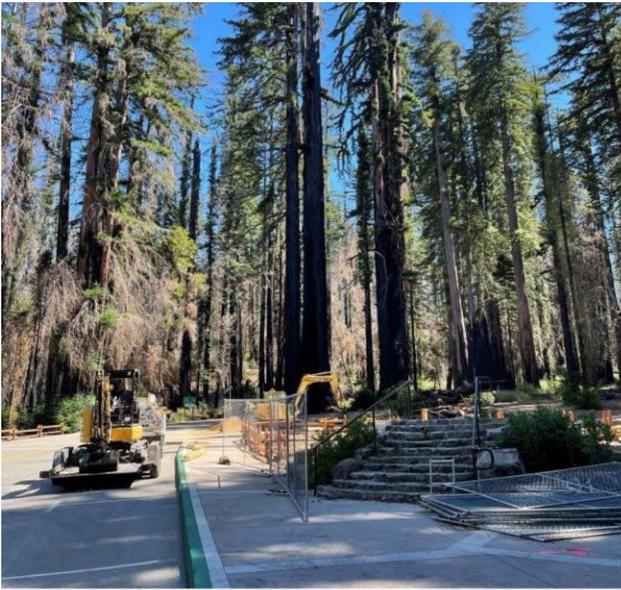
"Big Basin represents an iconic piece of history. With the partial reopening, it serves as a model of innovation for how parks can be both climate ready and accessible to all," said Kindley Walsh Lawlor, President and CEO of Parks California. "Restoring public access to Big Basin is an exciting opportunity for both community and visitors to experience this magnificent place."

- **Save the Redwoods League**

"The iconic old-growth redwoods of Big Basin are a shining example of the natural resilience of the redwood forest. It will be inspiring for the public to have an opportunity to see how this forest is bouncing back after fire," said Sam Hodder, President, and CEO for Save the Redwoods League. "Save the Redwoods League is honored to partner with California State Parks in developing a vision to rebuild an extraordinary park for all people, while working to ensure our communities and the landscape surrounding Big Basin remain resilient to climate change and future wildfires."

- **Sempervirens Fund**

"Although it will take some time for redwoods in Big Basin to look red again, nature is healing, and it is remarkable that the public can now return and visit the park less than two years after the devastating CZU wildfire," said Sempervirens Fund Executive Director Sara Barth. "In the earliest days, supporters from around the world rallied to support Big Basin, and as the park reopens, we can create new memories together in California's oldest state park."



Top left: Restoration work at the site of the former park headquarters. Bottom left: New split rail fencing along the accessible pathway in the former historic headquarters area. Right: The Auto Tree in recovery. Photos from California State Parks.

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California State Parks and the recreational programs supported by its divisions of Boating and Waterways, Historic Preservation and Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation provide the opportunity for families, friends, and communities to connect. Off-highway motor vehicle recreation, boating activities, horseback riding, cycling, hiking, camping, rock climbing, tours, hikes, school group enrichment, and special events are just some of the activities enjoyed in 279 park units organized into 21 field districts throughout the state. Learn more at www.parks.ca.gov.

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About Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks

Established in 1976, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks (Friends) is a vital partner with California State Parks, creatively working to ensure our cherished local parks and beaches are thriving and available to all. Friends' innovative and collaborative community partnership provides support and investment for education, equity and inclusion, conservation, facilities improvements, historic preservation and cultural events. Friends currently operates a robust online ParkStore offering nature- and history-themed merchandise for sale to benefit local parks and beaches. Friends also operates ParkStores at Natural Bridges, New Brighton, Santa Cruz Mission, Seacliff, Wilder Ranch. Learn more at www.ThatsMyPark.org or via [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Pinterest](#).