



Foundation Document Overview

Redwood National and State Parks

California



Contact Information

For more information about the *Redwood National and State Parks Foundation Document*, contact: redw_superintendent@nps.gov or (707) 465-7335 or write to:
Superintendent, Redwood National and State Parks, 1111 Second Street, Crescent City, CA 95531

Description



Redwood National and State Parks (the parks) in extreme northwestern California, consist of four units: Redwood National Park (under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service) and three state parks—Prairie Creek Redwoods, Del Norte Coast Redwoods, and Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Parks (under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Parks and Recreation). Together, these parks in Del Norte and Humboldt Counties encompass some 131,983 acres, 71,715 acres of which are federally owned and fall within Redwood National Park. This national park system unit stretches about 50 miles in length with 37 miles of coastline and varies in width from 0.5 mile to 8 miles. Park headquarters are in Crescent City, California, which is equidistant (350 miles) between San Francisco, California, and Portland, Oregon. Five information centers provide orientation, information, and trip-planning advice.

Early efforts of the Save the Redwoods League and other conservationists led to the creation of California state parks to protect the area's remaining old-growth coast redwoods from extensive logging that threatened the existence of the oldest and largest trees. Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park, and Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park were developed in the 1920s and Redwood National Park was established in 1968 and expanded in 1978. Together, these parks preserve about 40,000 acres of old-growth redwood forests, which represent most of the last remaining old-growth coast redwood groves on Earth. In addition, the parks protect the world's largest coast redwood forests and its tallest living trees. Important not only for their massive size, coast redwood trees anchor one of the most productive ecosystems on Earth. This environment is highly differentiated and provides habitat for numerous plants and animal species, from the forest canopy down to the forest floor.

The diverse ecosystems of northern California have supported human life for thousands of years. The Chilula, Hupa, Tolowa, and Yurok peoples have been intimately connected to the land within Redwood National and State Parks since time immemorial. Descendants of these original residents continue to live nearby and help guide the parks' interpretation of the ancestors' lifeways. European American settlers brought vast changes to established patterns of human influence on the landscape, bringing with them new forms of ranching, farming, industry, government, and commerce. Later mechanization and industry practices nearly decimated old-growth redwood forests, which spurred a lengthy environmental movement to save the redwoods. Redwood National Park's museum collection chronicles all of these aspects of park history and culture. Park staff and partners work to preserve and interpret sites, buildings, and landscapes that reflect this evolving chronology of human influence on the land with places such as the Lyons Ranches Historic District, Bald Hills Archeological District, Me-weehl 'O Le-gehl (Gann's Prairie), Prairie Creek Fish Hatchery, and the World War II B-71 Radar Station.

The National Park Service and California Department of Parks and Recreation jointly manage Redwood National and State Parks under a cooperative management agreement first signed in 1994. This agreement was designed to streamline management of the parks by allowing staff, funds, and resources to be shared and used by both agencies. As part of the agreement, both agencies follow a single general management plan / general plan, completed in 2000. Approximately 1,400 acres of federal land and waters under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service within the parks are also within the boundary of the Yurok Reservation. The Yurok Tribe and the Department of the Interior are entering into an agreement that will direct the National Park Service and the Yurok Tribe to engage in a joint comprehensive management plan for the area within both the Yurok and national park boundaries.



Park Map



Purpose

REDWOOD NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS share in the perpetual stewardship of ancient coast redwood forests, streams, coastal ranges, and coastline; for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of people forever; with a commitment to watershed-scale restoration of damaged landscapes.



Significance

Significance statements express why Redwood National and State Parks resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Nearly half of the world's remaining old-growth coast redwood forest, including some of the oldest and tallest trees in the world, are found in Redwood National and State Parks. These forests provide an important refuge for a diverse community of plants and animals and help protect the world's climate through their ability to sequester massive quantities of carbon.



Significance

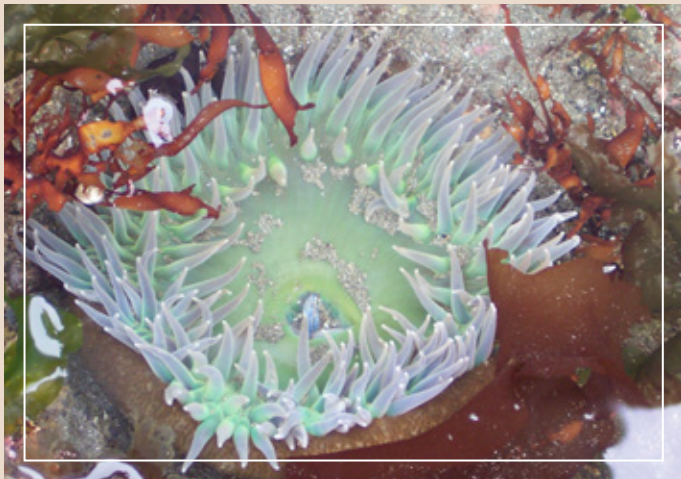


- Redwood National and State Parks are the ancestral lands of the Chilula, Hupa, Tolowa, and Yurok people. Through their resilience, the Hupa, Tolowa, and Yurok people remain on their homelands today, and continue to rely on the landscape and its resources for spiritual, cultural, and physical sustenance as they have done since time immemorial.
- Redwood National and State Parks provide opportunities to experience and draw inspiration from the natural sounds and scenic views including subtle variations of light and fog found within the natural cathedral of old-growth redwood forests. The wilderness character, exceptional air quality, and dark night skies found within this landscape enhance and contribute to the quality of this experience.
- Redwood National and State Parks' unique combination of powerful flooding events and unstable geology, violent earthquakes, and tsunamis generated by uplift near the intersection of three tectonic plates, make it one of the most rugged and wild landscapes along the Pacific Coast of the continental United States.
- The intensity of 20th century old-growth redwood logging spurred controversy and unparalleled conservation efforts that resulted in the establishment of the three state parks and a national park that comprise Redwood National and State Parks. The contrast between the old-growth forests, visibly damaged ecosystems, and ongoing restoration efforts provide a stunningly graphic example of the evolution of resource practices and our nation's conservation values; this example fosters for the public a deeper understanding of, and appreciation for, the protection of complex and fragile ecological systems.
- The 1978 Redwood Act that expanded Redwood National Park and the 2002 expansion of Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park established a precedent for park land protection by prescribing comprehensive management for watershed-scale restoration and recovery of damaged ecosystems extending beyond park boundaries. The internationally recognized restoration efforts of Redwood National and State Parks have continued to evolve and set a standard for building ecological resilience through cooperative management.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Ancient Redwoods.** Redwood National and State Parks preserve some of the largest contiguous ancient coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) stands in the world. Nearly half of the world's remaining old-growth redwoods and several of the world's tallest trees are found within parks' boundaries.
- **Physical Processes and Water Resources.** A constant interplay of physical, climatic, and oceanic processes shape the parks' landscapes of rugged coastlines, wild rivers and streams, rich estuaries, and inland marshes and lagoons. These landscapes showcase the diversity of the parks' water resources and the transformative properties of crashing waves, fierce winds, and the geological instability of the coast.
- **Ecosystem Diversity.** The almost 132,000 acres (53,400 hectares) in Redwood National and State Parks represent a mosaic of incredibly varied but interconnected ecological communities that house an astonishing level of biodiversity. Old-growth redwood forests, second-growth stands, oak woodlands, open meadows, tidal and estuarine zones, and the park's rivers and coast and their associated wildlife contribute to the park's broad range of flora and fauna.



- **Ecological Integrity.** Since the 1978 Redwood National Park Expansion Act, many of Redwood National and State Parks' efforts have been dedicated to revitalizing or restoring degraded lands on a watershed scale. Increasing ecological resiliency and maintaining habitat connectivity is crucial for preserving native biodiversity, threatened and endangered species, and ecosystem function.
- **Scenic Resources and Natural Sounds.** The parks' natural environment provides benefits to visitor experiences found in Redwood National and State Parks. Clean air, dark night skies, scenic daytime experiences, and natural soundscapes contribute to visitor appreciation and experience of healthy biological communities and feelings of solitude.
- **Traditional Culture and Use.** The Chilula, Hupa, Tolowa, and Yurok peoples have been intimately connected to the land included within Redwood National and State Parks since time immemorial and continue their traditional use of resources for spiritual, cultural, and physical sustenance. Redwood National and State Parks recognize and respect the continued connection of American Indians to this landscape.

Fundamental Resources and Values

- **Cultural Sites and Landscapes.** Sites and landscapes found throughout the parks show the pre-contact, historic, and continued cultural use of land and resources by local Chilula, Hupa, Tolowa, and Yurok people. Nineteenth and 20th century landscapes are representative of settlement, military developments, economic development, and conservation movements in the region.
- **Science and Education.** The rich biodiversity and old-growth redwood ecosystem of the parks provide research and educational opportunities relating to old-growth redwoods, threatened and endangered species, ecosystem interconnectivity, resilience, restoration, and the effects of climate change. Redwood National and State Parks foster a learning laboratory for all ages through an extensive education program aimed at creating new environmental stewards and supports research to understand and manage the natural resources of the parks. The parks' education programs play a significant, ongoing role in the development of national environmental education practices.
- **Partners in Stewardship.** Partnerships with other public agencies, federally recognized tribal governments, local communities, and other organizations and private entities are vitally important for the successful management, maintenance, and improvement of ecological integrity and cultural authenticity at Redwood National and State Parks. Since 1994, the National Park Service and the California State Parks have jointly managed the four parks that comprise Redwood National and State Parks in a national model for collaborative management and landscape-scale resource protection.
- **Opportunities for People to Connect to the Landscape.** Redwood National and State Parks encourages visitors and local residents to interact with the landscape and build personal connections to park resources facilitated by a variety of active and passive recreational pursuits. The ancient redwood forest evokes a nearly universal experience that provokes the human spirit, but challenges human description.



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- The ancient redwood forest evokes a nearly universal experience that provokes the human spirit, but challenges human description.
- As an icon of and inspiration for the modern conservation movement, the coastal redwood forest represents a living example of our changing and sometimes competing cultural and social values over time.
- These rare forests, watersheds, and marine environments are home to an interrelated biotic community of plants and animals and provide increasingly important refuges for a number of rare and endangered species. The restoration of these ecosystems offers hope for the future of these irreplaceable species and the human capacity for inspiration, stewardship, and sustainability.
- The journeys of the Chilula, Hupa, Tolowa, and Yurok peoples, who continue to inhabit these rich and diverse lands, reveal cultural clashes of horrific proportion and stories of human resilience that provide enduring lessons about human rights, resourcefulness, interdependence, and respect for life.
- One of the most geologically active areas in the world, the dynamic landscapes of Redwood National and State Parks are shaped by powerful earth movement, dramatic water events, and a changing climate. These same forces continue to shape the entire Earth and instill in us an awareness of the interconnectedness, overwhelming power, and resilience of nature.
- Seeking a better life, settlers arriving on the wave of the largest mass migration in US history—the gold rush—carved a home in these rugged but resource-rich lands through both convergence and conquest, bringing titanic change to the land and its peoples, fueling unprecedented growth but leaving future generations longing for that which is irreplaceable.

