

State formally takes over Soquel Demonstration Forest

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The 2,900-acre Soquel Demonstration Forest, an experiment in timber harvesting practices, was formally turned over to the California Department of Forestry this morning by The Nature Conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy became the trustee for the forest in a complicated four-way deal among the forest's former land owner, State Controller Gray Davis, the Bank of America and The Nature Conservancy.

The land was purchased from the Pelican Timber Co. a couple of years ago as part of a deal engineered by Assemblyman Sam Farr between the state controller and the bank to settle a lawsuit over the bank's handling of dormant bank accounts.

The Nature Conservancy was brought in to manage the land.

But Farr had already sponsored a bill that set up the Soquel Demonstration Forest under CDF control on the Pelican property — if the state could scrape together more than \$10 million to purchase the property.

The idea languished until the Bank of America settlement came to Farr's attention.

The Soquel Demonstration Forest is located on the east branch of Soquel Creek and includes portions of Amaya Creek and Fern Gulch drainages. The forest is the first new addition to the Demonstration State Forest System since 1949.

The area was heavily logged in the early 1900s and young-growth redwoods and hardwood trees predominate on the site. But there are some stands of old-growth redwoods on the property, some near the dedication site near Badger Springs and on a ridgetop boundary with the

Forest of Nisene Marks State Park.

The forest has several unique geological features. The San Andreas Fault crosses the northern portion of the property. The Zayante Fault traverses the southern portion of the forest. Many landslides and open cracks were created by the Oct. 17 earthquake, and thousands of redwood treetops were snapped off by violent shaking.

Cold sulphur springs began running again after the quake and hydrogen sulfide gas belched from openings in the earth.

CDF manages seven other demonstration state forests in California. With the addition of the Soquel forest, the total acreage is 71,564 acres. The purpose of the forests is to investigate and demonstrate the feasibility of forest management practices that promote continuous sustainable forest production; to provide education and recreational opportunities; and to conserve and protect wildlife, soil, fisheries, scenic and watershed values.

The Soquel forest is unique because it is the only state forest close to the large metropolitan populations of the San Francisco and Monterey Bay areas.