

Santa Cruz County

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Big Basin, Pescadero parks linked

New trail connects San Mateo, Santa Cruz and Santa Clara counties

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BIG BASIN STATE PARK — The Basin Trail, a strategic new connection between Big Basin state park and Pescadero Creek County Park in San Mateo County, is scheduled to open this week, the culmination of several decades of negotiations.

The opening will represent a linking of trails in San Mateo, Santa Cruz and Santa Clara counties.

"It's very short, but it connects so much," said Bob Emert of the San Mateo County Parks department. Although formal negotiations began in 1980, Emert said he has been involved in informal talks to obtain the easement since 1969. "It made sense then and it makes sense now."

The 1½-mile trail goes through logging land north of Boulder Creek owned by Redtree Properties.

The non-profit Sempervirens Fund negotiated the tri-party agreement that created the easement, one of the first ever to cross timber company land, said

John Gilliland of the Sempervirens Fund.

Sempervirens, California's oldest land conservancy, owns the easement, but eventually will turn it over to the state parks system, he said.

According to Gilliland, obtaining the easement involved a series of land swaps along Butano Ridge on either side of China Grade Road. "There were all kinds of pieces of Red Tree and Big Basin (state parks) property on either side of the road."

After the swaps, the road has become the boundary between logging company and state parks land, he said.

Redtree Properties was formerly San Lorenzo Lumber Co., owned by the late Les and Don Ley.

Emert said the brothers worked with Sempervirens to plan the connection through the historic lumbering operation and the park lands surrounding their property. Both brothers died before the final sign off, he said.

The new trail means that a horseback rider can start at Waddell Creek

in Rancho del Oso State Park along the North Coast, ride to Big Basin Redwoods State Park, and travel the new Basin Trail to Pescadero Creek County Parks, said Emert.

After dropping into Pescadero Valley and down to Portola State Park, the rider can connect with trails into San Mateo, Santa Clara or Santa Cruz counties, he noted.

Until the link, travelers had to travel a serpentine 40-mile mountain road between the two park systems, he said.

Volunteers from the Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Association built the trail. It will open to the public April 29, with a grand-opening hike led by State Parks Director Donald Murphy and Sempervirens Fund Executive Director Verl Clausen.

For safety reasons and to conform with the trail easement agreement, bicycles and motorized vehicles are prohibited.

Logging will continue on the Redtree lands.



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