



Big Basin

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Big Basin Adds Campsites To Save Trees

(Editor's Note: This is the last of three articles on Big Basin State Park.)

The average family spending a weekend camping at Big Basin State park probably wouldn't think of injuring the awesome redwoods that make the area the beautiful place it is.

Yet these same campers, picnickers and other visitors — 750,000 a year — are injuring the big trees, however innocently.

By their very numbers they are wearing away the life-giving "duff" that once covered the earth around the Sequoia sempervirens to a depth of six to eight inches. This duff, a soft, porous cover of weeds, ferns, fallen twigs and pine needles, caught and held the falling rains, allowing the moisture to soak into the earth to feed the giant trees.

At the same time, this slowly decomposing vegetable matter fed the redwoods with rich nutrients vital to growth.

But in many of the well-used areas at Big Basin today this cover has been worn completely away, threatening the trees with what has been called "human erosion." Without the vital nutrients, without the water that now runs rapidly away from the hard-packed soil, the redwoods would die over a period of decades, according to Park Supervisor Anton J. Trigeiro.

To counter this threat, the State Department of Parks and Recreation, Division of Beaches and Parks, has established a long-range expansion plan designed to ease the burden on the present camping and picnicking sites by luring visitors to new areas.

On a recent visit we traveled along Sky Meadow road and noticed small wooden stakes along the road with red flags attached

Camper's Log

—surveyors' markers.

"We're opening a new camping area here," Trigeiro explained. "There'll be one hundred new campsites. What you see now is preliminary work—widening the road to take care of increased traffic, extension of water mains, sewer lines and power facilities to serve the new area."

The idea, he added, is to ease the burden on the over-used areas by converting them to day use only — for short trails, for example, where traffic could be limited to specific boundaries, allowing the protective duff to reform under the redwoods.

The initial work on these 100 new campsites is under way, a \$437,950 expenditure approved last week by the state.

"Eventual plans call for 400 other new campsites, mostly in the Elk Paddock area east of Sky Meadow," said Trigeiro. "This not only will take the load off current camping areas, but greatly increase our total capacity. There currently are 260 campsites at Big Basin."

The 100-campsite development in the Wastahi area may be completed by next summer. This area, incidentally, is a former Campfire Girls camp, and was named by that group by taking the initial letters of the words Water-STAr Hill to form an Indian-like name.

The long-range development plans also call for a whole new "settlement" in the Sky Meadow area, complete with lodge, rental cabins, coffee shop, store — even

a swimming pool. This project, Trigeiro said, would be built by private capital under state specifications. It is expected to be under way in two years and completed in four.

The method would be to award contracts for development to private firms on a concession basis, all strictly under department specifications, and all with a view toward preserving the natural beauty of the Sky Meadow area.

Trigeiro said John Hightower, concession officer for the State Department of Parks and Recreation already has had contact with private investors regarding the Sky Meadow development.

The object of all these plans, in addition to expanding park facilities to meet the needs of an ever-growing population, is to preserve the redwood trees that are the park's raison d'être.

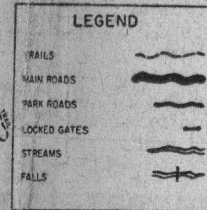
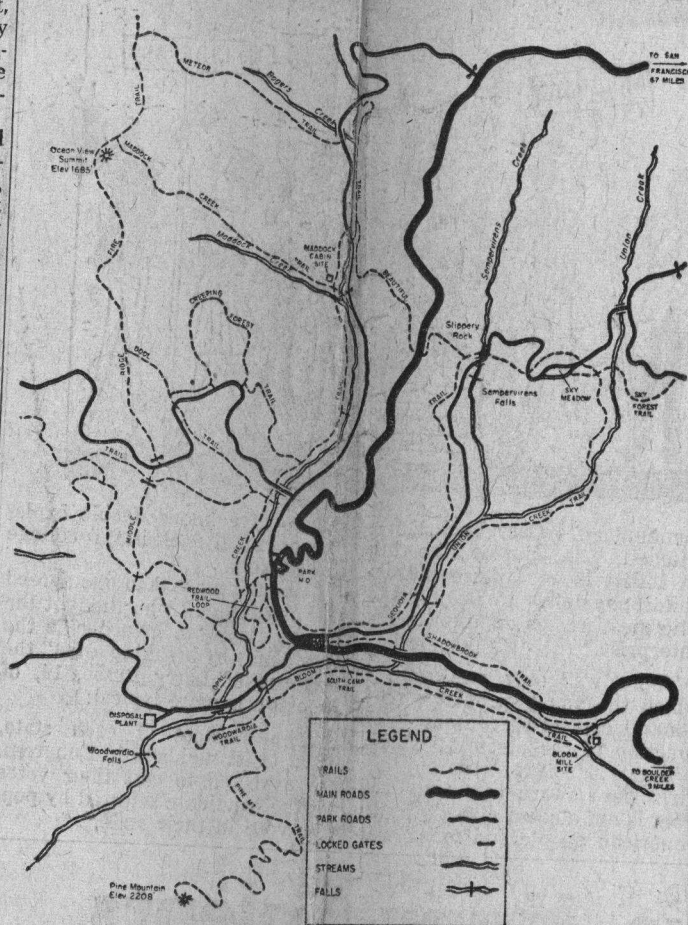
Areas of greatest wear would be spared further, damaging traffic. The current headquarters area would be converted to day use only, with new trails winding through current camping areas, where short-time visitors could stroll amid the majesty of the redwoods as the big trees slowly rejuvenated.

The current headquarters building is slated to be turned into a natural museum, which would be moved from its present, crowded quarters and expanded. The headquarters would be relocated in the area of Campground D.

Hence the emphasis at Big Basin will be two-fold: expansion and preservation, although the staff at the park puts the emphasis on the latter . . . to insure that the ever-living redwoods do just that.

JK

(End of Series.)



On the trail map of Big Basin State Park, above, the expansion-development area referred to in the accompanying article lies generally within the triangle formed by Sempervirens and Union creeks and Sky Meadow road. Immediate plans

call for 100 new campsites with long-range plans for 400 additional sites, plus 150 new picnic sites and a development consisting of a lodge, rental cabins, shops, store and swimming pool, the latter development to be built by private capital under strict state supervision.