



## Exploring New Horizons Big Basin General Plan Fact Sheet

California State Park's mission is *"To provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation."*

Big Basin State Park was founded in 1906 as the first formal park unit of what is now the California State Park System. It was founded to ensure that all Californians had the opportunity to enjoy the inspiration, enjoyment and enlightenment that the redwood forest has to offer. California State Parks has been charged to protect and preserve the cultural and natural resources throughout Big Basin and ensure that they provide educational opportunities to the public to increase understanding and knowledge of these resources.

In 1998, California State Parks began the "Children in Nature" initiative. This initiative works to increase the amount of time, access and opportunity that youth spend discovering the natural world by engaging in dynamic partnerships between the public, private and nonprofit sectors to ensure continued funding and awareness for nature experiences for students and youth. In line with this initiative, The Sempervirens Outdoor School, a program of Exploring New Horizons (ENH), was opened in Big Basin State Park in 2001 to provide 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students the opportunity to participate in week-long residential environmental education programs.

Beginning in 2001, State Parks General Planning team began drafting the General Plan for Big Basin. The intention is to create a long-term vision for the park that would best represent the cultural, recreational and natural resources of the park. As outlined

The current plans includes:

- The removal of current tenant, Exploring New Horizons and the Sempervirens Outdoor School from the Saddle Mountain facility.
- The transformation of the Saddle Mountain educational facility into a parking lot and visitor center. This would serve as the entry point into the State Park facility.
- No formal educational plan. The three current proposed alternatives do not include any long term vision or plan regarding the educational opportunities
- The potential addition of tents and cabins amongst old growth redwood trees.
- The expansion and development of current roads.
- No current outline for the care and preservation of the number of rare animal species living amongst the redwoods and Hwy 236 corridor.

### Key Points Regarding Big Basin General Plan:

1. As California's first state park, Big Basin's has a unique legacy in preserving California's old growth redwoods and protecting the local historical and natural resources.
2. One of the most important initiatives of State Parks to get children more connected and engaged with their natural surroundings.
3. The California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights promises that all youth should have access, the ability, and the opportunity to participate in a wide range of discovery based activities including following a trail, explore nature, camp under the stars, and play in a safe place.

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4. Big Basins General Plan as it is currently outlined would call for the direct removal of Exploring New Horizons and the Sempervirens Outdoor School from the Saddle Mountain property. This would terminate a current existing partnership to provide hands-on educational opportunities for over 2,000 students annually.
5. Upon removal from the Saddle Mountain property, State Parks would develop this property into a main parking lot and visitor welcome center for Big Basin. Countless natural resources would be demolished to put in new parking lot.
6. State Parks has no current documented plan to replace or expand active educational opportunities for the general public, specifically youth. General interpretation goals call for signage and other passive educational tools, but no mention of hands-on measures to engage youth. This lack of educational agenda is directly contradictory to the overarching goals of State Parks to increase the level of engagement and opportunity provided to youth today.

**Action Steps:**

1. Read and review the current Big Basin General Plan Planning Concepts.
2. Attend upcoming public meetings and express your concern regarding

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**About Exploring New Horizons:**

Exploring New Horizons (ENH) inspires youth to become engaged citizens and active stewards of our natural environment. Since 1981, we have been working as a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) to provide over 7,100 students annually with dynamic programming focused on three programmatic strands: 1) Environmental Awareness and Natural History 2) Cooperation, Group Dynamics and Team Building and 3) Self-esteem, Empowerment, and Citizenship.

The Sempervirens Outdoor School, a program of ENH, was opened in 2001 to provide 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students the opportunity to participate in week-long residential environmental education programs. Students have the opportunity to spend a day amongst the redwoods in Big Basin SP, in the tidepools and Natural Bridges SP, and amongst the oaks trees on site. In 2007 California State Parks purchased the Saddle Mountain property where Sempervirens currently sits. Today, Sempervirens serves over 2,100 students annually during 32 weeks of program. Over 35% of the participating students receive scholarship dollars to attend. These students from Title 1 schools have often times never had the opportunity to enjoy the majesty of a redwood tree, and would not otherwise have the opportunity to spend a week immersed in the natural world.