



## BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK Facilities Management Plan



# Engagement Summary

### SUMMER 2023

## ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW

This document summarizes and synthesizes the results from all engagement activities carried out between June and September 2023 as part of the preliminary outreach phase to develop the Basis of Design Document for the Big Basin Redwoods State Park Facilities Management Plan.

- **Community Grant Program** (Summarized in Appendix B)
- **Focus Group Discussions & Individual Meetings** (Summarized in Appendix C)
- **Online Survey** (Summarized in Appendix D)
- **District Staff Design Charrette** (Summarized in Appendix E)



## ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The wide range of engagement activities conducted were designed to reach four distinct, yet overlapping, groups, described in the diagram below.

### California Public

Online engagement opportunities for all interested members of the California public

### Local Engagement

- Saddle Mountain Neighbors
- Boulder Creek Area Community and Civic Leaders
- Environmental Group Leaders
- User Group Leaders (Equestrian and Mountain Biking)
- Indigenous Representatives (rightholders)



### Focus Communities

Engagement of underrepresented groups, including people of color, youth, and people with disabilities (through community-based organizations)

### Partners Working Group

- Amah Mutsun Tribal Band
- Muwekma Ohlone Tribe
- Sempervirens Fund
- Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks
- Mountain Parks Foundation
- Parks California
- Save the Redwoods League
- Latino Outdoors

Each of these groups will be engaged at each stage of the planning process, and outreach approaches are intended to maximize participation and improve the diversity of perspectives represented.

### STAGE 1

(Mid 2023 - Early 2024)

Learn about technical studies and provide input on visitor experiences

Online Survey

In-Person Open House

Focus Groups

On-site Experiences

### STAGE 2

(Mid 2024 - Late 2024)

Review site design concepts and provide input on facility preferences

Virtual Workshop

In-Person Open House

Focus Groups

Pop-up Events

### STAGE 3

(Early 2025)

Learn about preferred design concept and support implementation

Virtual Open House

In-Person Open House

Focus Groups

On-site Experiences



## ENGAGEMENT GOALS

The intention of engagement activities completed during this phase of the planning process was to:

- Set clear expectations about the planning process.
- Collect insights from a broad range of individuals and groups regarding visitor experience preferences.
- Give special attention to community groups who have historically been under-represented in State Park planning.
- Provide a venue to listen to concerns and develop a nuanced understanding of priorities among local leaders, Indigenous individuals and representatives, and park neighbors.

## ENGAGEMENT SYNTHESIS

Overall, engagement results show broad support for the Guiding Principles that emerged from the Reimagining Big Basin Vision Process. Using those eight Guiding Principles as a framework, a high-level synthesis of engagement insights across all activities is provided below.



**Prioritize Forest Health**



**Provide Equitable, Diverse, and Evocative Visitor Experiences**



**Diversify Transportation and Access Opportunities**



**Practice Land Stewardship**



**Include Indigenous Perspective**



**Foster Landscape Connectivity**



**Design with Reverence and Resilience**



**Engage the Park Community and Build Partnerships**



### Prioritizing Forest Health

- Prioritize the ecological health of the old growth and providing opportunities to connect to nature.
- Relocate facilities outside of old growth areas to protect ecological processes and sensitive species, particularly marbled murrelet (MAMU).
- Consider how returning visitation to pre-fire levels in the old growth will negatively impact MAMU.

### Provide Equitable, Diverse, and Evocative Visitor Experiences

- Ensure parks offer inclusive experiences for all visitors, especially BIPOC and queer individuals.
- Representation matters: employ diverse staff, leadership, and multilingual interpreters.
- Key features for visitor centers: clear park information, short nature trails, picnic areas, welcoming staff, and camp stores.
- Preferred camping experiences: walk-in campsites, rustic cabins, car camping, and both short and long backpacking trips.
- For day-use: prioritize trail access, varied picnic areas, and amenities like water, toilets, and cell service.
- Prioritize safety and inclusivity for BIPOC visitors.
- Offer culturally competent translations of park materials.
- Increase outreach to BIPOC communities.
- Address transportation and cost barriers for low-income visitors.
- Enhance accessibility with facilities for larger gatherings and accessible picnic spots.
- Provide specific facilities and amenities for equestrian and bike users

### Diversify Transportation and Access Opportunities

- Reduce vehicle traffic and congestion and improve accessibility through expanded shuttle and bus service.
- Prioritize parking at the shuttle stop, shorter headways (many shuttles per day), and having facilities such as bathrooms at the shuttle stops. Lower prioritization for route directness, indicating several stops along the route may be considered.
- Design shuttle program to be low-cost and low-emissions. Other important features include the



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availability of park information on board and space to bring bicycles or camping equipment.

- Consider shuttle routes that promote local businesses and draw attention to local history.
- Ensure strong communication with local community members related to parking access and the shuttle system.
- Address transportation and cost as significant barriers for many lower-income Californians. Low-cost or free shuttles can help.

### Practice Land Stewardship

- Plan for off-stream water storage, rainwater storage, managing food and garbage, and minimizing impacts in the old growth.
- Incorporate sustainability in new facilities: greywater reuse, rainwater harvesting, EV charging stations, composting toilets, etc.
- Realize opportunities for incorporating Indigenous stewardship, history, and cultural practices throughout Big Basin.

### Include Indigenous Perspectives

- Respond to interest from community members and partners in engaging with the history and present of Indigenous peoples of the Santa Cruz mountains at Big Basin.
- Work with Indigenous partners on cultural access, stewardship, and interpretative resources centering Indigenous stories.
- Provide Indigenous cultural/ceremonial space at Little Basin.

### Foster Landscape Connectivity

- Expand equestrian access and supportive facilities, including an equestrian staging area.
- Provide more designated biking trails and more infrastructure to support cyclists and mountain bikers such as bike parking areas.
- Enhance safe trail access and better access to basic facilities for all trail users.
- Improve trail communication regarding trail uses and conditions, and signage for wayfinding.

### Design with Reverence and Resilience

- Reinforce understanding of the need to relocate and redesign facilities to protect old growth ecosystems.
- Rebuild facilities to reflect the historic character of previous facilities.



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- Design for accessibility using Universal Design principles. ADA accessibility emerged as a strong priority. Engagement with people with disabilities during the design process is suggested.
- Ensure sustainable design of the new facilities, including water and energy conservation features.

### Engage the Park Community and Build Partnerships

- Address Neighbors' concerns about the impacts of facilities, trespassing, and general safety.
- Promote ongoing engagement and communication between park Neighbors and State Parks.
- Consider how amenities in the park could benefit Neighbors. These included potentially connecting to fiber internet; installing an accessible pay phone; improving cell service areas; providing emergency landing zones for helicopters; and oversight of the area by an increased number of park rangers.
- Design shuttle routes and stops in ways that will support local businesses.
- Continue focused outreach: People want to feel “heard” and messaging should be appropriate to the audience.
- Engage in partners to support the Park in its communication efforts by amplifying social media posts.





## HIGHLIGHTED INSIGHTS FROM ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The engagement process for the BBFMP is designed to give special attention to focused engagement activities and to highlight diverse perspectives. Engagement tools like online surveys or public open houses are part of the engagement plan but have historically failed to prioritize insights from the broadest range of community members and support participation from individuals and communities that match the full diversity of the state. For these reasons, the following focused engagement activities are summarized below, including novel insights that emerged from those engagements.

### Community Grant Program

The goal of this community grant program is to include a diverse range of perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, and expertise in the public planning process for Big Basin's redevelopment by prioritizing focus communities that are historically underrepresented, have been less frequent visitors of the park, and/or have been less involved in park planning. Particularly, Parks California is prioritizing grants to lower income communities and communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. In the first round of engagement there were a total of 100+ individual participants across 12 individual events, the following groups received grants to conduct on-site guided hikes:

- Latino Outdoors
- Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks
- Saved by Nature
- Disabled Hikers\*
- Community Bridges
- Amah Mutsun Land Trust\*

\*Note: Disabled Hikers and Amah Mutsun Land Trust events were scheduled after the completion of the summary and feedback from those events are not included in this summary.



## Hiking Workbooks

One aspect of these guided hikes included a hiking workbook that was available in both English and Spanish. The workbook included questions and prompts to gather information about visitor experience preferences that may be helpful in making decisions about facilities planning, design, and management.



The workbook included both multiple choice questions and more open-ended and creative prompts, all of the information written and drawn in the workbooks was recorded and transcribed. A complete summary is available in the [BBFMP Basis of Design Appendix B](#). Words that appeared frequently in workbook entries are presented in the word cloud below:







## Key Insights from Community Grant Program Participants

The following insights from Community Grant Program Recipients reflect the need for a more inclusive, safe, and culturally representative park experience, while also addressing equity issues related to transportation and access.

### Inclusivity:

- Representation and welcoming environment for Black, brown, indigenous people of color, and queer individuals.
- Diverse staff and leadership for better representation.
- Multilingual staff and signage are important for welcoming all communities.
- Targeted outreach to different communities.
- Tailored messaging to make visitors feel heard and valued.
- Visitors connect with nature for personal growth, healing, and resilience.

### Safety and Anti-Racism:

- Addressing mistrust and racial issues through anti-racist training for park staff.
- Providing knowledge and tools for safe park access.
- Improving roadway safety on remote roads.
- Addressing cost and planning barriers.
- Ensuring facilities are accessible for people of all abilities.
- Recognizing that there are diverse approaches to outdoor trips.

### Cultural Representation and Acknowledgment:

- Acknowledging holidays and celebrating cultural events from all communities
- Inclusive events and free parking days can make parks more accessible to everyone.
- Recognizing Black stories of settlement and slavery.
- Acknowledging the historical impact of systemic racism on park access.
- Acknowledging indigenous history, practices, and land stewardship.
- Supporting indigenous stewardship and conservation efforts.
- Acknowledging and supporting the land back movement and reparations.

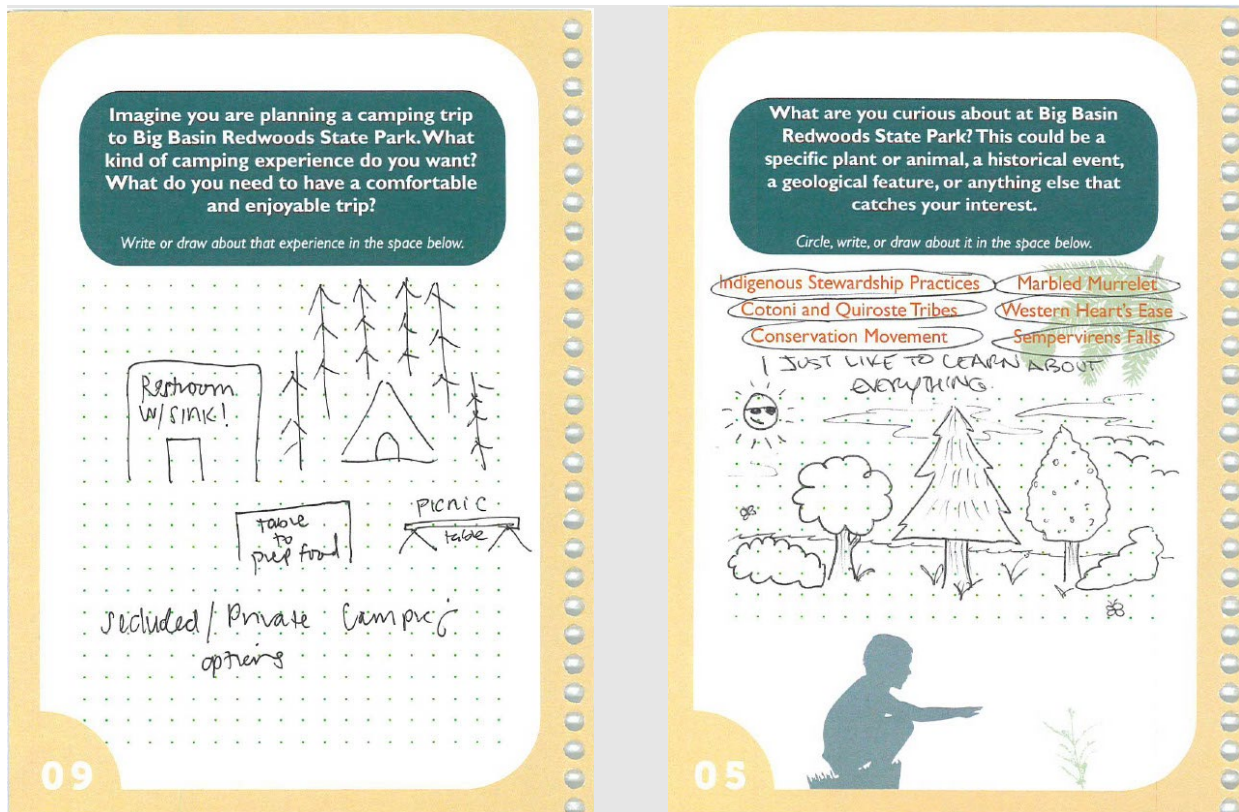
### Equitable Access and Transportation:

- Prioritizing transportation access to address difficulties in getting to the park.
- Supporting focused transportation programs and community events.



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- Providing gear libraries with sliding-scale options.
- Viewing all planning efforts through an equity lens and prioritizing community engagement.



In addition to written commentary and on-site discussion, the hiking workbooks also invited participants to draw about some of their ideas, as seen in the examples above. A complete record of all drawings is included in [BBFMP Basis of Design Appendix B](#).



## Focus Groups and Individual Meetings

California State Parks, together with the consulting team supporting the BBFMP, conducted 6 focus groups and 6 individual meetings with Indigenous representatives, neighbors, partners, local leaders, and others. These focus groups and meetings were intended primarily as Listening Sessions to provide an opportunity to build trust and to identify mutually beneficial opportunities for collaboration and partnership. A complete set of meeting summaries is included in [BBFMP Basis of Design Appendix C](#).

### Focus groups were conducted with:

- Environmental Groups: Ecology Action, Save the Redwoods League, Santa Cruz Mountains Bioregional Council, Sempervirens Fund, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, and Center for Biological Diversity (August 31, 2023)
- Local Leaders in Boulder Creek (September 14, 2023)
- User Groups: Santa Cruz County Horsemen's Association and Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Stewardship (two separate focus groups on September 19, 2023)
- Saddle Mountain Neighbors (two separate meetings: September 26, 2023 [via Zoom] and September 30, 2023 [in-person])

### Individual meetings were conducted with:

1. Seraph White, Outdoors Empowered Network & Bay Area Wilderness Training
2. Cat Willis, Santa Cruz County Black Health Matters Initiative (SCCBHMI)
3. Meredith Cook, Community Bridges
4. Dustin Schmucker, UCSC Recreation
5. Richard Tejeda, Saved by Nature
6. Val Lopez, Amah Mutsun Tribal Band

### Important insights from these focus groups and meetings include:

#### Broad Support for Focus on Ecological Health and Sustainability

- There is very strong support, particularly from environmental groups, but also widely across other participants, for protecting the ecological health of the old growth. Some environmental group participants are concerned that draft plans may still allow too much use in and near old growth.
- Participants want to ensure that new facilities are designed with a focus on sustainability. Sustainability suggestions included greywater reuse, rainwater harvesting, bioswales and meadows, passive building design, charging stations for electric vehicles, composting/incinerating



toilets, managing food and garbage to minimize impacts on marbled murrelet, and providing community resilience centers to help address climate risks for the wider community.

### Need to Increase Sense of Safety and Welcome for BIPOC Visitors

- Participants feel strongly that it is important to foster a sense of safety and inclusivity to help BIPOC visitors and other members of other traditionally underrepresented groups feel comfortable, safe, and welcome at Big Basin. The park needs to continue to work with community-based organizations to determine the best ways to do this.
- Communication approaches and language used are important. Providing more culturally competent translated materials and avoiding insensitive language in signage and interpretive materials would increase accessibility and sense of welcome.

### Attention Needs to be Given to the Many Components of Increasing Accessibility

- Transportation and cost are major barriers for many low-income Californians who would like to visit Big Basin.
- Ways to address affordability include low-cost or free shuttles, low-cost or free recreational opportunities for students and families, eliminating parking and other fees for special programming, and establishing gear libraries that provide rentals on a sliding scale.
- User groups want safe trail access and better access to basic facilities such as bathrooms and trash receptacles for trail users across the park. Areas for equestrian staging and more bike friendly infrastructure would help increase access for those uses.
- Clear communication and signage including wayfinding, maps, and online resources would also improve accessibility.
- ADA accessibility also emerged as a strong priority. Participants suggested additional engagement with people with disabilities during the design process.

### Increasing the Visibility of Indigenous Stories and Practices Should be a Priority

- Across focused engagement participants feel that there are important opportunities for incorporating Indigenous stewardship, history and stories, and cultural practices throughout Big Basin. Ongoing funding for Tribal stewards could play an important role in ensuring that this work is done well.
- There is support for providing Indigenous cultural/ceremonial space at Little Basin, but there is also concern about accessibility, shared public and Tribal use, challenges associated with multiple Tribes using the site independently.



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### Neighbors Want to Minimize the Impacts of Facilities at Saddle Mountain

- Neighbors remain very concerned about potential impacts from additional facilities at Saddle Mountain. They are particularly concerned about traffic and road conditions, trespassing and safety, and potential nuisance issues like trash and noise.
- Ideally, neighbors would like Saddle Mountain facilities to be designed for more limited use, only during times of peak park visitation. The exception to this is general support for staff housing at Saddle Mountain.





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## Online Survey

California State Parks administered an online survey between July 21 and October 1, 2023. The survey was promoted through social media and Enewsletters by California State Parks and a package of promotional materials was shared with park partners to help spread the word. Physical posters were also printed and posted at the Park and at other local locations. While the survey received participation from over 1250 respondents, results may be biased toward those who are familiar with the park and organized groups interested in influencing planning decisions. The online survey provides useful insights, but is not a random sample of park users or the California Public.

A narrative summary of key insights is below and complete survey results are available in [BBFMP Basis of Design Appendix D](#).

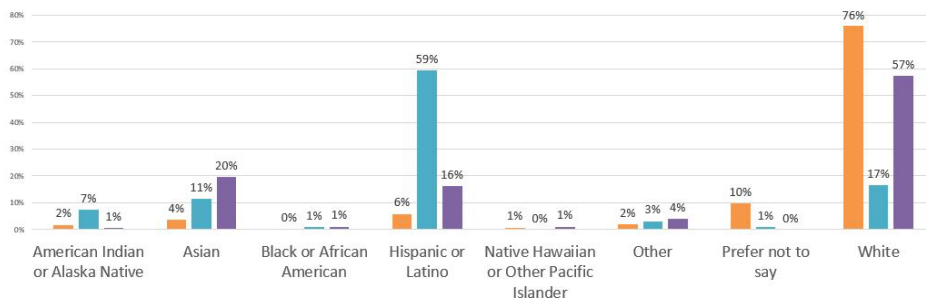
## Survey Respondents Insights

- **Survey Respondents know the park well.** Of the 1258 survey responses, approximately 19 out of every 20 respondents had visited Big Basin Redwoods State Park, and Two-thirds of survey respondents indicated that they have made more than 10 lifetime visits to Big Basin Redwoods State Park.
- The following graphs demonstrate the survey respondent **demographics compared** to participants in the community grant program, and a random sample of park visitors in Summer 2023.

## Participant Insights

Proportion of Participants by Race/Ethnicity

Online Survey (n=1288)  
Community Grant Program (n=96)  
Summer 2023 Visitor Survey (n=558)





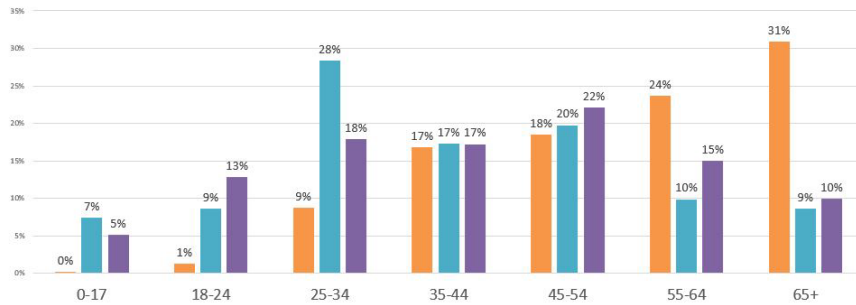
# BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK

## Facilities Management Plan

### Participant Insights

Proportion of Participants by Age

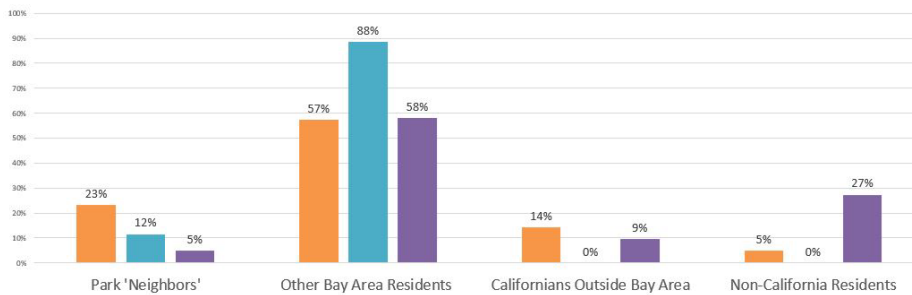
Online Survey (n=1241)  
Community Grant Program (n=81)  
Summer 2023 Visitor Survey (n=453)



### Participant Insights

Proportion of Participants by Zip Code

Online Survey (n=1229)  
Community Grant Program (n=78)  
Summer 2023 Visitor Survey (n=464)



**Park 'Neighbors':** Zip Codes 94020, 94021, 94060, 94074, 95005, 95006, 95007, 95017, 95018, 95033, 95041, 95060, 95064

**Other Bay Area Residents:** All other Zip Codes in Nine County Bay Area, Plus Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties

### Visitor Center

- Most respondents (71%) categorized having park **information about trails and things to do** at the park as something that would make them feel most welcome at a visitor center. Other popular features include **short nature trails** or hiking options available from the visitor center, outdoor **picnic areas** nearby, **welcoming staff**, and a **camp store** to buy supplies.

### Camping

- Top priorities for campground amenities among survey participants include **available drinking water, flush toilets, picnic tables, firepits, and bins for recycling and waste**. About a third of survey respondents also included **showers** as a high priority.
- Top priorities for camping experiences among survey participants include secluded campsites, availability of campsites, places to hike from their campsite, and being able to see the stars.



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- In terms of appealing camping experiences, four out of 10 survey respondents were interested in **walk-in campsites** with parking less than ½ mile away, **tent cabins** or rustic wood cabins, and **car camping** next to their vehicle and near other campers. Shorter **backpacking** and longer backcountry camping experiences were also appealing to about one in four survey respondents.
- In terms of preference for walk-in campgrounds, survey respondents prioritized **spacious and secluded** site locations, a **short walk** of less than ½ mile, and having **access to drop off belongings** by vehicle or shuttle even if there is no parking at the site.

### Day Use

- Regarding day-use experiences, survey respondents prioritize access to **trails, drop-in picnic areas, and walk-in picnic areas.**
- Regarding day-use amenities, survey respondents prioritize **running water, flush toilets, and cell service.**

### Shuttle

- Regarding a potential shuttle system, survey respondents prioritize **parking** at the shuttle stop, **shorter headways** (many shuttles per day), and having facilities such as **bathrooms** at the shuttle stops. Few survey respondents prioritized route directness, indicating they may be open to having **several stops along the route.**
- In terms of onboard features for a potential shuttle program, top priorities among survey participants were that the shuttle be **low-cost** and **low-emissions.** Other important features include the availability of **park information** on board and **space to bring bicycles or camping equipment.**



## BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK Facilities Management Plan

### Narrative Online Survey Opportunity



In addition to a survey with multiple choice responses there was a second survey section that provided an opportunity to reflect on more qualitative experiences, including describing core elements of evocative nature experiences and memories, and ideas about how to make the park more welcoming to all visitors. Eighty-six (86) individuals responded with inspiring thoughts which are included in [BBFMP Basis of Design Appendix D](#), and are summarized below:

#### Key Insights from Narrative Survey Participants:

##### Evocative Nature Experiences:

- Connecting with nature is deeply valued for the silence, solitude, and tranquility it offers, away from daily life.
- Engaging with wildlife and flora, through activities such as hiking and camping, fosters a profound sense of wonder and spiritual fulfillment.
- These experiences are often described as peaceful and special, enhancing feelings of serenity and connectedness.
- Shared moments with loved ones and reflective childhood memories in nature add meaningful depth to these encounters.
- Mindfulness and sensory engagement are key to appreciating nature's nuances, with natural phenomena further enriching this bond.

##### Facilities and Programs:

- Visitors seek a range of camping experiences, from full-day backpacking to accessible walk-in sites, along with a mix of hiking trails suited to all levels.
- There is a strong interest in self-guided interpretive hikes, possibly app-assisted, alongside learning opportunities about Indigenous history, wildlife, and park's past.
- Requests for designated biking trails and safety measures for all trail users are common.
- Participants enjoy campfire programs, ranger-led activities, and look for inclusive facilities for



individuals with disabilities and provisions for dog-friendly areas.

- There is a desire for the restoration and preservation of historical features, trails, and access to evocative nature experiences, with family-friendly and educational amenities taking precedence.
- Suggestions include interactive displays, adequate amenities, citizen science activities, and platforms for sharing wildlife encounters.
- The community values diverse landscapes, sustainable practices, and minimal impact camping, with a keen interest in both cultural heritage and natural tranquility.

### Supporting a Welcoming Experience:

- Creating a hospitable environment through accessible amenities, multilingual support, and facilities for all abilities and experience levels.
- Providing comprehensive, easily understandable information via signage, maps, visitor centers, and digital resources on park history, trails, and recovery from events like the CZU fire.
- Encouraging educational and sensory experiences with interactive exhibits, educational programs, and opportunities for reflection and learning about the ecosystem's resilience and redwoods' role in the environment.
- Incorporating infrastructure that respects the natural landscape, using fire-resistant materials, and ensuring the maintenance of natural views and historical park character.
- Offering a variety of recreational activities, from hiking to horseback riding, along with necessary facilities such as clean restrooms, water access, and safe parking.
- Fostering community involvement and connection through volunteer opportunities, spaces for story sharing, and by rebuilding iconic structures with historical charm.
- Ensuring visitor safety and convenience with clear directions, information on fire management, and providing Wi-Fi and cellular services that complement the natural experience.





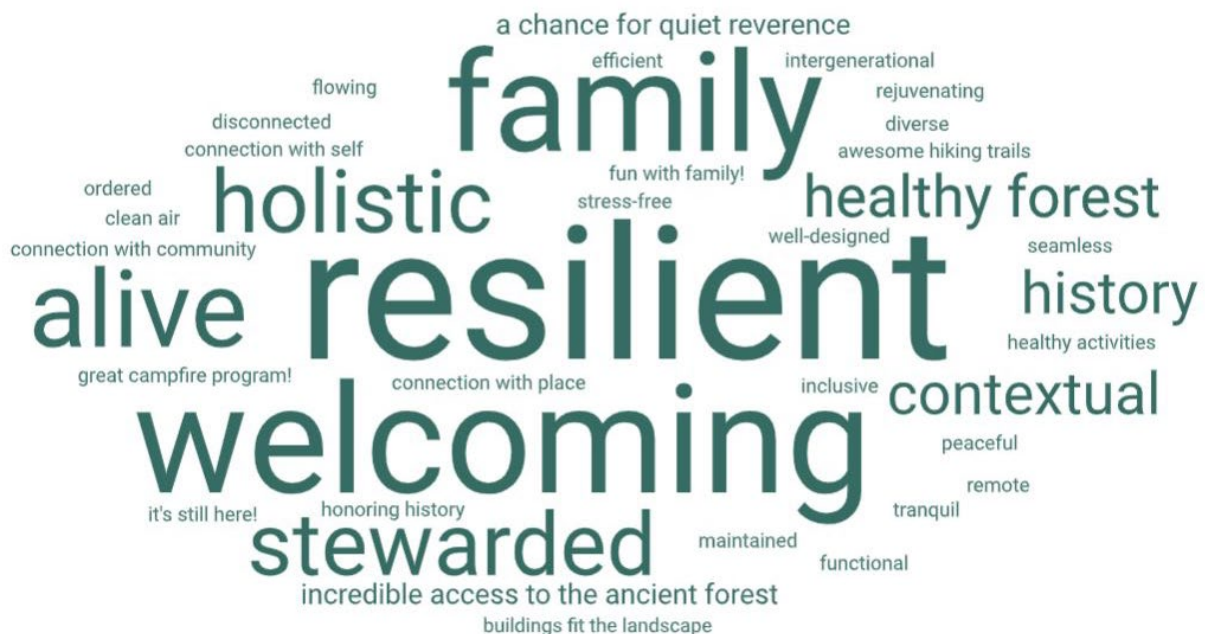
## Design Charrette with District Staff

On September 28th, 2023, Big Basin Redwoods State Park Staff met with Placeworks and Mithun for a design charrette — a focused collaboration session meant to flush out big ideas, complex details, and overall strategies. A complete summary of the charrette is provided in [BBFMP Basis of Design Appendix E](#).

### Key Insights from District Working Group Charrette:

#### Future Experiences Brainstorm:

The day began with an open-ended question to get participants voicing their most essential values and aspirations for the park: “It’s 2043: What’s your impression after visiting Big Basin?” The group offered verbal and written answers to the prompt. Responses are captured in the word cloud below, with the size of text reflecting frequency.



A common theme throughout the day was the need to design the park in a way that learns from the vulnerabilities of the past, ensures efficient operation for many years, and prioritizes forest health. Participants often framed decision-making through the lenses of restoration goals, structural impacts on the land, and offering ecologically sensitive visitor interpretation and experience. Park staff understand the important potential for Big Basin to become an example of forward-thinking natural resource management.



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### Insights about Facilities at Saddle Mountain:

During the program placement activity, each group assembled a strong centralization of all three program categories at the Saddle Mountain / Norabella / Potter area. More specifically, groups tended to place visitor-serving and operations program on the south side of Highway 236 at Saddle Mountain and Potter, while creating a residential village to the north on the Norabella properties.

### Insights regarding Staff Housing:

The residential fabric of the Park pre-CZU was primarily single-family homes and smaller cabins. After seeing the variety of approaches available, the consensus was that a mixture of housing types offered the right balance of sustainability, equity, and community. Some hesitation to accept the most-dense example of stacked flats evolved into general support for co-housing models that encouraged neighborhoods of Park staff. There was also support of all home sizes, from family-sized for long-term staff to smaller studio-sized for temporary or younger staff.

### Insights regarding Visitor Experiences

Excitement for a diverse range of visitor experiences permeated throughout the day, particularly during the program-placement activity. Ideas included new trails and hiking experience, multi-modal access strategies, environmental education centers, partnerships with outside organizations, sites for indigenous knowledge sharing, novel forms of teaching about forest health, and strong support for campfire programming.





## BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK Facilities Management Plan

# Engagement Summary

SUMMER 2024

## Objectives

Engagement activities during the summer of 2024 represented the second phase of engagement for the Big Basin Redwoods State Park Facilities Management Plan (BBFMP) process. This phase of engagement had the following objectives:

- Present a set of three design alternatives to the public, stakeholders, partners, focus communities, and tribal representatives. The design alternatives included parkwide facilities distribution diagrams and site planning concepts for key locations.
- Share how the alternatives were developed as the result of the Basis of Design, which included existing conditions analysis of opportunities and constraints and an emphasis on the Guiding Principles developed as part of the Reimagining Big Basin Visioning Process.
- Describe the ways in the design alternatives will be evaluated, and how a preferred alternative will



emerge from among the three preliminary design alternatives.

- Build trust that new facilities will support familiar and nostalgic experiences and honor the history and significance of the park.
- Capture feedback about visitor preferences, needs, and priorities as they relate to the selection and refinement of the preferred alternative.

## Activities

The following activities were conducted as a part of this phase of engagement:

- **Interactive Online Survey (255 Responses).** Including illustrations, sketches, and diagrams, this web-based experience gave the public an opportunity to explore what it might be like to visit Big Basin when facilities are rebuilt. The StoryMap format included embedded questions that sought to gather feedback about visitor preferences, needs, and priorities – particularly as they relate to facilities that support a diverse range of activities and how best to honor the history of facilities lost to the CZU fire. The interactive survey was available in both English and Spanish.
- **Focus Community Outreach through Community Grant Program including paper survey (118 Participants).** Onsite experiences were facilitated by community grant program administered by Park California, and provided opportunities for organizations to bring folks to the park that may not otherwise have the opportunity to visit to participate in the planning process. Grantees included PUENTES, Latino Outdoors, SAMO Youth, Barrios Unidos, Community Bridges, Santa Cruz Black, the Amah Mutsun Land Trust, Bay Area Wilderness Training, and Saved by Nature.
- **On-Site and Local Event Pop-ups (~150 People Engaged).** A set of visually dynamic and easy-to-understand boards presented key ideas that are included in the design alternatives and provided an opportunity for park staff to engage in conversations with park visitors to gather open ended feedback about visitor experiences, needs, and concerns related to future facilities planning. Pop-up outreach was conducted at the Art in the Park Event at Big Basin, First Friday at the Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History, the Downtown Santa Cruz Farmers Market, and other locations.
- **Design Alternatives Feedback Form (65 Responses).** A simple and convenient online portal for members of the public to submit specific feedback about site planning considerations and other facility and management considerations included in the three design alternatives.
- **Focus Group Discussions with Local Leaders, Saddle Mountain Neighbors, and Park Partners.** Options were provided for virtual and in-person attendance at three separate focus group meetings. About 60 participants were invited to these three focus group meetings and 27 people participated in the three meetings.





- **In-Person Public Open House (~50 attendees).** Hosted at the Simpkins Family Swim Center in Santa Cruz, the open house included stations for each of the key sites throughout the park. The open house included a presentation from PlaceWorks and CSP District staff. The meeting was advertised through social media, the Big Basin newsletter, by partners and was in the local newspaper including front page articles the week of the meeting both the San Jose Mercury and the Santa Cruz Sentinel.
- **Tribal Engagement.** Santa Cruz District staff offered opportunities to all local tribal representatives and met at Little Basin with members of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, and separately with members of the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone to discuss opportunities for Indigenous partnership, restoration, stewardship and collaboration to create a Mixed Tribal Use space at Little Basin to highlight cultural awareness and living Indigenous culture.

### Insights and Synthesis

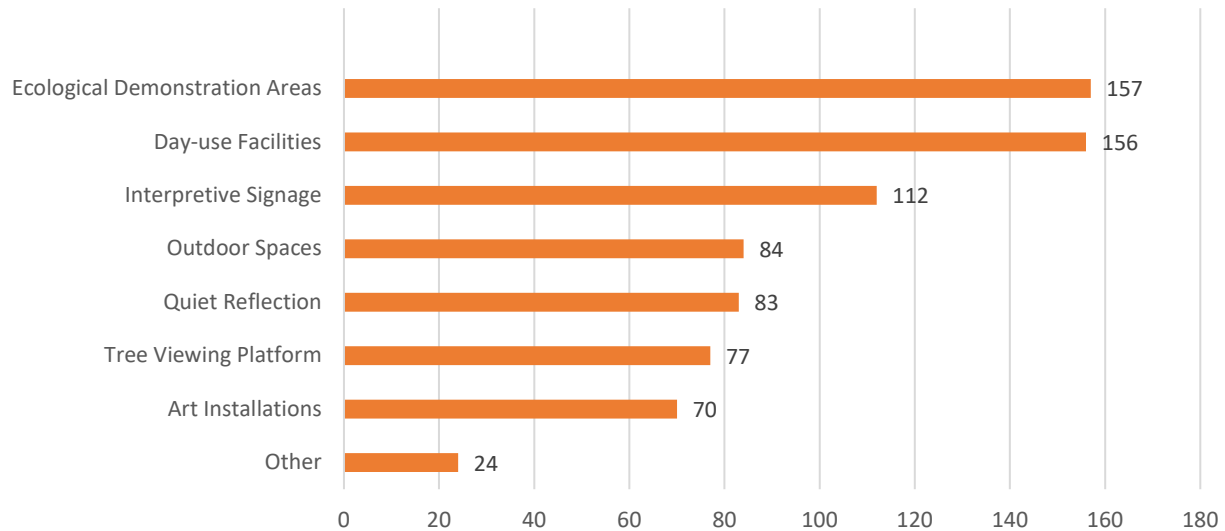
This section provides a synthesis of insights from each of the activities described above that should be considered in the selection of the preferred alternative from among the three design alternatives and provide guidance for the refinement of the preferred alternative in the next planning phase.

#### Interactive Online Survey





FIGURE 1 : Online Survey Results  
How might we imagine the site of the former  
Headquarters Building?



**Ecological & Educational Interests:** Respondents showed a strong interest in ecological demonstration areas and spaces for learning about redwood forest regeneration, alongside day-use facilities like picnic areas and interpretive signage.

**Gathering & Reflection Spaces:** Many respondents supported the creation of quiet reflection spaces and gathering spots, incorporating historical elements like the Big Basin Lodge Chimney.

**Cultural & Historical Significance:** Respondents also wanted more signage and interactive exhibits that include the history of California Native American tribes, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and the history of the park before the fire.

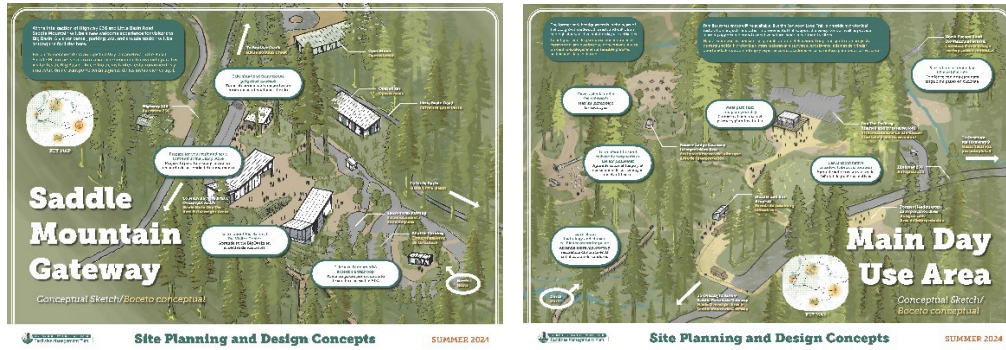
**Fire Education:** Many emphasized the importance of educating visitors about fire's natural role in the redwood ecosystem and the impacts of climate change on wildfires.





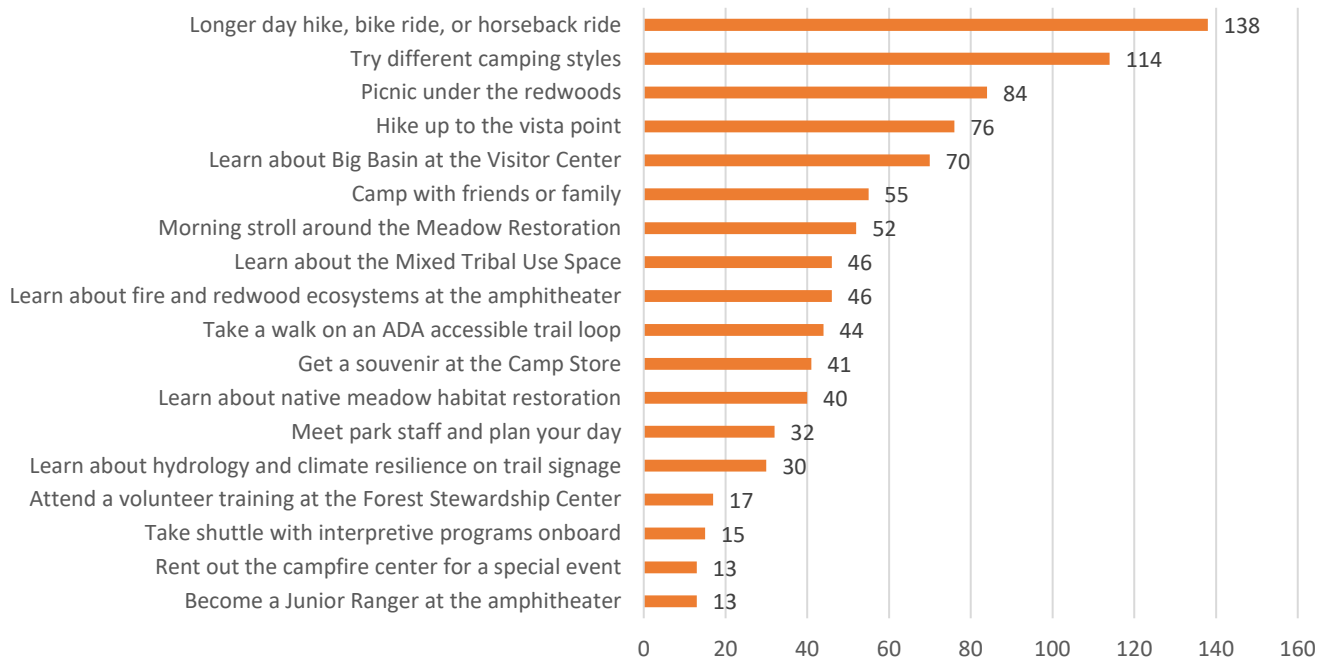
# BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK

## Facilities Management Plan



**FIGURE 2 : Online Survey Results**

After exploring the design ideas for the four core areas which experiences are most important to you or are you most excited about having at the park?



**Camping & Recreational Needs:** A variety of camping styles was highlighted as a priority, along with biking, hiking, and accessibility to trails for people with different physical abilities.

**Inclusive Facilities:** Features like sensory-friendly and quiet interactive spaces for people with disabilities were repeatedly requested.



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## Focus Community Outreach and Pop-ups



**Inclusive Facilities:** There is strong support for designing inclusive and welcoming spaces where staff and rangers can communicate in multiple languages, ensuring that visitors from diverse backgrounds feel comfortable and informed. Multilingual signage throughout the park, including at trailheads, restrooms, and visitor centers, was frequently mentioned as essential to make the park more accessible to non-English speakers and to support a more inclusive visitor experience.

**Culturally Relevant and Interactive Design:** Respondents expressed a desire for culturally relevant facilities, including interactive exhibits and outdoor museums that educate visitors about indigenous cultures. Murals and art installations were also highlighted as ways to represent the cultural history of the park. Feedback from the focus communities emphasized the need for spaces dedicated to California Native American use, allowing for the continuation of indigenous cultural practices within the park.

**Accessibility and Universal Design:** A key insight from the engagement was the strong advocacy for accessible facilities, including wheelchair-friendly picnic tables, ADA-compliant trails, and accessible



restrooms. The idea of offering wheelchair rentals and multilingual signage was also seen as critical for ensuring that all visitors can enjoy the park. There was a noticeable appreciation for accessible transportation options, with participants emphasizing the importance of clear bus schedules and accessible shuttles that cater to visitors with mobility challenges.

**Nature-Inspired and Sustainable Design:** Many respondents expressed a preference for facilities that blend naturally with the environment, favoring the use of natural materials and a rustic, cozy aesthetic. Large windows, natural light, and sustainable construction practices were identified as important features for future park buildings. Sustainability was a recurring theme, with respondents advocating for sustainable building practices, including solar energy, water refill stations, and designs that minimize the environmental footprint while ensuring visitor comfort.

**Art Walks and Interpretive Trails:** A popular idea that emerged from the engagement was the concept of art walks along trails, featuring interpretive signage with educational content about the park's natural and cultural history. This was seen as a way to engage visitors of all ages while encouraging them to explore the park's diverse environments. The addition of interactive features such as tactile exhibits and interpretive stops along trails was also suggested to make the park more engaging and educational for visitors.

**Community-Centered Spaces:** There was significant interest in creating community-centered spaces designed for large families, youth, and seniors. These spaces, which could serve as gathering places for picnics, group activities, and educational programs, were seen as essential for accommodating a wide range of visitor needs. Participants highlighted the value of educational zones and volunteer centers, where school groups, families, and local organizations can engage in conservation and history programs. These spaces would support long-term community engagement and provide opportunities for learning and career exploration.

### Design Alternatives Feedback Form

**Camping and Visitor Access:** Flexibility and variety in camping options were repeatedly highlighted, with preferences for tent-only, group, and RV camping areas. Participants appreciated the ability to camp under the redwoods and expressed support for designs that allow a balance between different camping styles.

**Historical Preservation and Park Identity:** There was a strong desire for rebuilding the original park headquarters, as it holds significant historical and emotional value for visitors. Respondents suggested that rebuilding it would honor the park's heritage and serve as a focal point for both education and visitor engagement.



**Reopening Trails and Rebuilding Park Infrastructure:** Several comments emphasized the need to reopen key trails, such as the Skyline-to-the-Sea trail, and to restore backcountry camps for long-distance backpacking trips. Delays in reopening these areas were a source of frustration. Respondents also highlighted the importance of preserving original structures where possible, noting that maintaining some connection to the park's previous infrastructure is important for historical and emotional reasons.

**Traffic, Parking, and Accessibility Concerns:** Concerns about traffic management were common, especially around the Saddle Mountain area, with many participants questioning the ability of the current infrastructure to handle an increase in visitors and vehicles. The introduction of shuttle systems was met with mixed reactions, as some respondents felt that it could limit access for frequent visitors and those seeking less congested areas. Suggestions were made to preserve parking near the Old Headquarters area to maintain easy access for regular park users.

**Wildlife Protection:** Wildlife protection was a concern, with participants suggesting measures such as wildlife crossings, solar-powered reflectors on roads, and other initiatives to reduce animal-vehicle collisions.

**Equestrian Access:** Equestrian facilities were appreciated in the design alternatives where present, with requests to ensure separate parking for horse trailers and access to water for horses in all scenarios. This segment of users was keen on having dedicated areas for equestrian activities, as well as access to trails.

### Focus Group Discussion with Local Leaders

**Connections to Natural History:** Participants would like to see a strong focus on natural history in the new facilities. They would like something that honors the legacy of the previous Nature Center and helps connect visitors to nature in the Park.

**Ecological Protection:** Participants support designing site layouts and facilities to protect redwoods and restore meadows.

**Interpretation and Community Outreach:** Participants are very interested in seeing more interpretative outreach outside the Park through programming and signage in shuttles and buses and in libraries, schools, and other community hubs.

**Facilities Planning Process:** Participants want to make sure that engagement about facilities reaches as many community members as possible and that it prioritizes reaching underrepresented groups as well.





### Focus Group Discussion with Saddle Mountain Neighbors

- **Minimize Development at Saddle Mountain:** Neighbors who participated in the focus group strongly prefer Alternative 3 and a more dispersed approach to siting facilities. They strongly object to Alternative 1.
- **Signage and Communication:** To help reduce use of the Saddle Mountain site, neighbors want to ensure that there is good signage or other technology for clear communication about when people can park down by the Old Headquarters and when they would need to park at Saddle Mountain.
- **Minimize Potential Negative Impacts of Facilities Development:** Neighbors want to make sure that final site layout and facilities design address their concerns about safety, traffic, trespass, noise, and visual impacts as much as possible. They want to make sure they have input in the future when designs are more detailed and accurate.
- **Potential Park Expansion:** Some of the neighbors are particularly concerned about additional property acquisitions via Sempervirens. They would like an opportunity to express their concerns directly to Sempervirens and any State Parks staff involved in the acquisition process.
- **Site Design Elements:** Neighbors expressed a desire for some site design elements that may not be feasible while rebuilding to meet project goals. These include use of Tan Bark Loop Trail for the main vehicle entrance to Little Basin; fencing at Saddle Mountain along Little Basin Road; excluding PV panels from the site because of aesthetic concerns; and providing large buffer zones around surrounding properties.

### Focus Group Discussion with Park Partners

**Saddle Mountain Gateway:** Participants supported the shift towards a Saddle Mountain-focused hub rather than continuing to use the traditional HQ as the Main Day-Use Area. This was seen as beneficial for prioritizing restoration of natural resources and reducing the concentration of visitor impact in one area. Both Alternatives 1 and 2 were considered strong design options.

**Main Day-Use Area:** Participants slightly preferred Alternative 3 for its focus on vehicular, shuttle, and pedestrian circulation, though Alternative 2 was also viewed positively for its layout. Alternative 1 was less favored, as it was seen as too focused on drivers instead of creating a more pedestrian-centered experience. There was a preference for a smaller footprint for structures, with interpretive signage dispersed along trails and boardwalks.

**Little Basin:** Alternative 1 was favored due to the proximity of staff housing to tent sites, providing practical





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benefits for park operations.

**Operational and Financial Considerations:** There were questions about the financial viability of park operations, particularly concerning the costs of shuttling and camping, and whether these services would need concessionaire support to be sustainable.

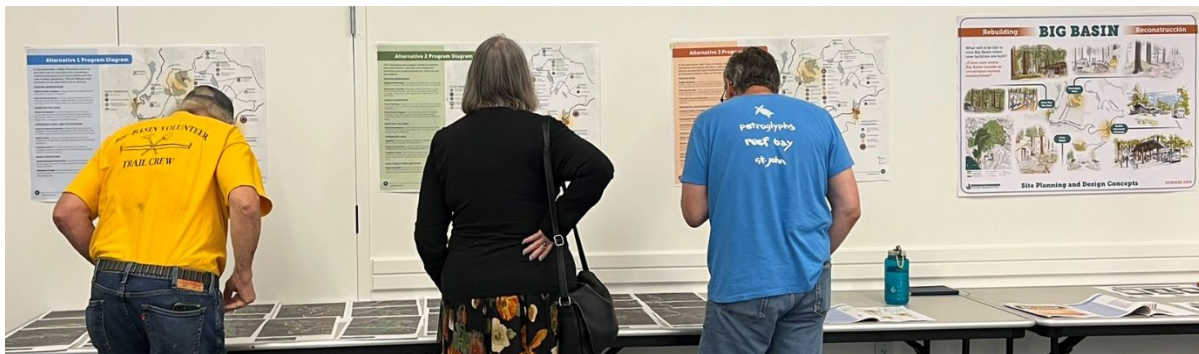
**Camping Accessibility:** Participants asked about the availability of low-cost, non-tent sites for new campers from historically excluded communities, expressing interest in ensuring that camping options are distributed throughout the park and accessible to all.

**Housing for Park Staff:** The group emphasized the importance of providing adequate staff housing, suggesting that as much housing as possible should be included without detracting from the visitor experience. They noted that housing costs are a significant issue for park staff, and addressing this could help with recruitment and retention.

**Role of Retail Partners and Visitor Services:** Participants questioned whether a camp store at Little Basin is necessary if Saddle Mountain could serve this function, given its location as an entryway to other camping areas.

**Shuttle Experience:** Participants suggested incorporating activities for visitors waiting at shuttle stops, both at Saddle Mountain and the Main Day-Use Area, such as interpretive displays or countdown warnings for shuttle arrivals.

### In-Person Open House



**Main Day Use Area:** General support for resource protection and limited facilities in this area prioritizing direct nature experiences. Some attendees requested a drop-off area at the Main Day-Use Area, allowing family members to drop off some people while others park at Saddle Mountain, rather than relying



exclusively on the shuttle.

**Shuttle Stops:** Participants supported the use of multiple shuttle stops to encourage hiking but suggested that the 35 Bus should go directly to the Main Day-Use Area.

**Intrapark Travel Options:** Safe pedestrian and bike circulation between facility areas was seen as essential for enhancing visitor experience, particularly for campers needing to move between overnight areas and the Main Day-Use Area.

**Overnight Facilities and Connectivity:** Participants called for the return of tent cabins with improved accessibility, and a focus on maximizing backpacking campsites. There was a desire to emphasize pedestrian/trail access throughout the park, with requests for a bike connection between Little Basin and the Main Day-Use Area and dedicated backpacker parking.

### Tribal Engagement

**Mixed Tribal Use Space:** General support for partnership between State Parks and Indigenous groups to include places for stewardship projects, restoration, cultural burning, cultural awareness, education, and interpretation and ceremony at Little Basin. Specific projects that have been highlighted by local Indigenous groups are space for doing sweat lodges, and outdoor kitchen, and space for ceremonial dance. These uses and facilities should be developed collaboratively with leadership from local Indigenous groups.

**Stewardship Corps Training Facility:** A training space for stewardship corps would allow Indigenous groups to build capacity and complete restoration and cultural stewardship projects in the park.

**Cultural Burning, Restoration, and Stewardship Partnership:** There is strong desire to conduct cultural burns in the mountain grassland areas at Little Basin, to complete meadow and wetland restoration projects at Little Basin.

**Interpretation and Cultural Awareness:** There is a strong desire for representation of current Indigenous presence and culture in the park including through a cultural center and place for Indigenous use for ceremony. There is also a goal for trails in Little Basin with interpretive elements about Indigenous culture and opportunities for Indigenous people to lead guided walks along these trails at Little Basin.



## BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK Facilities Management Plan

# Engagement Summary

SPRING - SUMMER 2025

## Objectives

Engagement activities during the Spring and Summer of 2025 represented the third phase of engagement for the Big Basin Redwoods State Park Facilities Management Plan (BBFMP) process. This phase of engagement had the following objectives:

- Present an overview of preferred sites/facilities parkwide, with a focus on communicating how input from previous stages of engagement has informed and will continue to inform planning, design, and implementation decisions.
- Gather focused input from property owners adjacent to the Saddle Mountain Site (Saddle Mountain neighbors) on the Saddle Mountain site.
- Gather input from environmental groups to inform next steps during the environmental review phase.
- Open the BBFMP planning process to public comment, particularly the environmental document and via a virtual public webinar.



- Author and present a high-level Project Summary for the public that summarizes the contents of the BBFMP (to be released in Fall 2025), including conceptual illustrations and an overview of the key design and planning considerations that informed both site-specific and park-wide decision-making.
- Continue to build trust and collaborative relationships between California State Parks and the public, stakeholders, partners, focus communities, and tribal representatives by highlighting BBFMP progress.

## Activities

The following activities were conducted as a part of this phase of engagement:

- **Saddle Mountain Neighbors Focus Group Meeting:** The Saddle Mountain Neighbors Focus Group Meeting was held on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025 from 6:00 to 7:30pm at the State Parks Building at Saddle Mountain. The meeting was held in-person with the option to attend virtually. The meeting was the most recent of ongoing meetings between the property owners of the Saddle Mountain area and California State Parks representatives. The goal of the meeting was to provide an update on the planning of the BBFMP as well as to provide an opportunity for discussion between both groups.
- **Environmental Focus Group Virtual Meeting:** The Environmental Focus Group Virtual Meeting took place on March 26, 2025 from 10 to 11am via Microsoft Teams. The meeting was led by Will Fourt, who presented updated information on the BBFMP and was facilitated by Amy Morris of Land and Water Connections Consulting. Participants included experts in environmental conservation and science: Matt Miller of Ecology Action, Lisa Barboza of Sierra Club Loma Prieta, and Shaye Wolfe of the Center for Biological Diversity.
- **BBFMP Project Summary and EIR Scoping Public Session:** The BBFMP Project Summary and EIR Scoping Public Session took place on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025 virtually via Zoom. The webinar was announced alongside the publication of the BBFMP project summary via California State Park's official newsroom on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The purpose of the webinar was to provide an update for the public on the current stage of recovery planning as well as the progress and contents of the BBFMP. Additionally, the session served as an introduction to the Supplemental EIR process, which formerly started during the meeting.
- **Biological Resources EIR Comment:** Following the completion of the EIR Scoping Public Webinar, a comment period was planned and communicated for public input on the biological resources component of the supplemental EIR. Comments could be submitted to the project overview, via mail, or live during the meeting.
- **Project Summary Publication:** The Project Summary of the BBFMP was a high-level overview of



the key components of the soon-to-be-released BBFMP. The Project Summary included a summary of the key design considerations that guided decisions during the current planning stage along with conceptual illustrations of the park's different areas.

- **Tribal Engagement.** In previous rounds of engagement, Santa Cruz District staff offered opportunities to all local tribal representatives and met at Little Basin with members of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, and separately with members of the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone to discuss opportunities for Indigenous partnership, restoration, stewardship and collaboration to create a Mixed Tribal Use space at Little Basin to highlight cultural awareness and living Indigenous culture. During this phase of engagement, Santa Cruz District staff continued to provide opportunities for Tribal collaboration.

## Insights and Synthesis

This section provides a synthesis of insights from each of the activities described above. The synthesis will be important for ensuring that the adoption and implementation of the BBFMP is aligned with the priorities established by the plan. Subsequent planning efforts, such as the Roads and Trails Management Plan, will also benefit from consideration of the insights below.

### Saddle Mountain Neighbors Focus Group Virtual Meeting

#### Support for Less Intensive Use Compared to Prior Alternatives

The neighbors group expressed overall support for the recommended Saddle Mountain alternative when compared to previous plans shared with them during previous engagement phases. In particular, neighbors supported a lower overall intensity of visitor use for Saddle Mountain compared to prior alternatives. Neighbors also approved of efforts that would minimize impacts due to traffic and congestion, such as the revised kiosk and entrance location, left turn options, potential to provide private driveway signs, and more.

#### Continued Concern for Saddle Mountain as Main Visitor Entrance

While the neighbors expressed greater overall satisfaction with the recommended alternative than prior alternatives from previous engagement sessions, there remains a concern about the impacts of locating the entrance and primary visitor hub at Saddle Mountain. Concerns cited include noise and traffic impacts, as well as concerns relating to trespassing and the area's potential aesthetic change.

#### Preference for Less Staff Housing at Norabella North

Echoing previous concerns about neighborhood impacts, the neighbors group expressed a preference for





less staff housing at Norabella North. If staff housing were to be built, efforts at reducing congestion, visual, and noise impacts were highly desirable to the neighbors. This included a request to locate potential staff parking at the rear of the housing units, out of view of the adjacent properties, and for it to be complementary to the 'Old Big Basin Road' aesthetic.

### Support for Little Basin Road Improvements and Indigenous Cultural Use at Little Basin

Improvements to Little Basin Road received support from the neighbors group, who also viewed it as a benefit for facilitating tribal cultural use and stewardship at Little Basin.

### Environmental Focus Group Virtual Meeting

#### Support for Reduction of Ecological Impacts on Old Growth Redwoods

Participants in the environmental focus group meeting expressed support for the overall reduction of ecological impacts on Old Growth Redwoods when compared to previous alternatives. Proposals to not rebuild former campsites and instead undergo habitat restoration received support, as several participants echoed concerns about the impacts of the campgrounds in a sensitive resource area.

#### Anticipating Visitor Behaviors and Impacts

Participants in the environmental focus group were understanding of the need to design around visitor behaviors to minimize anticipated impacts. For example, since visitors will eat, directing such activities to picnic areas and having guests watch and sign commitments to Crumb Clean Camping is viewed as an important strategy.

#### Balancing Recreation Access and Resource Protection

The need for State Parks to expand existing recreation access was understood by the environmental group participants, who maintained that expanded access must be accompanied by mitigation measures to minimize potential impacts to sensitive resources.

#### Support for Shuttle System

Strong support was expressed for the proposed shuttle system, particularly after confirmation that shuttle service would be zero emissions. Participants understood that ridership levels of the shuttle system and overall shuttle demand is highly dependent on the reopening of park trails and overnight facilities.

### Project Summary and Supplemental EIR Webinar

#### Continued Interest in Park Reopening and Access

A consistent theme during the webinar was continued interest in information about park facilities (in



particular trails and overnight areas) reopening in the short to long term future. Despite nearly five years having passed since the CZU fire at time of the webinar, webinar participants were keenly aware of pre-fire visitation and access trends. Many participants were curious about when pre-fire uses and facilities could be reopened (often framed as questions about when they could make an overnight reservation).

### Shuttle Capacity Accommodating Pre-Fire Visitation Levels

Strong interest was shown by webinar participants in the potential for the shuttle system to accommodate pre-fire visitation levels at the park. Participants supported the plan for the planned routes operating with 10-20 minute headways, though some participants were uncertain about the potential impacts that a shuttle system would have on the area surrounding Saddle Mountain, were the impacts of the shuttle and other new facilities would be greatest.

### Biological Resource Topics for the Supplemental EIR to Address

During the portion of the meeting dedicated to comment on the biological resource component of the supplemental EIR, participants commented concerns to impacts on Marbled Murrelet populations due to both increased visitor presence in habitat areas, but also due to significant decrease in potential habitat to Marbled Murrelet due to fire impacts on redwood trees. A figure cited was that of the 107 pre-fire trees supporting marbled murrelet nests, only 20% of them provide suitable nesting habitat today. A desire to aggressively protect the remaining 20% of suitable nest habitats and adjacent areas was argued to have great urgency.

### Public Interest in Tribal Participation

Throughout the presentation of the project summary, the project team fielded several questions about the extent to Tribal participation in the project to date. This interest was paired with an overall indication of support for increased Tribal cultural use and stewardship throughout the park, particularly in Little Basin.

### Public Interest in Trail Reopening Timeline and Allowed Uses

A common question from participants during the webinar was on the status of reopening trails and the allowed uses on the trails upon their reopening. The project team reiterated that trail reopening would take place in phases, with a multi-step process of rehabilitation and repairs requiring that some trails will take multiple years to reopen. With regards to allowed trail uses, the project team deferred questions to the future completion of the Roads and Trails Management Study, estimated to take place in early 2026.