

BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT

General Plan Approved
May 2013

Proposed Amendment
Public Draft
October 17, 2025



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Appendix A: 2013 General Plan

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Amendment Summary

The Big Basin Redwoods State Park General Plan was approved by the California State Park and Recreation Commission in May 2013. In August 2020, the CZU Lightning Complex Fire burned and destroyed almost all facilities at the park. State Parks completed the Reimagining Big Basin Vision Summary (2022) and Big Basin Redwoods State Park Cornerstone Document (2023) to guide rebuilding park facilities. In 2025, State Parks prepared the Big Basin Facilities Management Plan (BBFMP) to guide more specific site recommendations for rebuilding recreational facilities throughout core areas of the park. This proposed General Plan Amendment updates specific sections of the General Plan where needed to create clear consistency with the BBFMP. A supplement to the General Plan's Environmental Impact Report was prepared to address the facilities envisioned in the Facilities Management Plan and in this proposed General Plan Amendment.

The proposed General Plan Amendment includes the following clarifications and additions to the 2013 General Plan:

- **Lower Sky Meadow:** The recommendations for Lower Sky Meadow and Sky Meadow Group Camp are updated to reflect the BBFMP recommendation to develop new overnight camping facilities, including car-camping, cabins, tent cabins, small-group camps, a campfire center, shuttle stop, and related facilities including a campground check-in building with camp store, and a maintenance building, in and around this zone that had staff housing and two group camps before the CZU Fire.
- **Upper Sky Meadow Area:** The Rogers Road site (former Maintenance Yard), Upper Sky Meadow site (former park housing site) and Upper Lodge Road area are added to the description of Sky Meadow, and recommendations are added to reflect BBFMP plans to develop group camping and related facilities at the Rogers Road site; parking, walk-in camping and related facilities at the Upper Sky Meadow site; and walk-in camping and related facilities at Upper Lodge Road area.
- **Saddle Mountain:** A recommendation is added to develop staff housing and staff operation areas on properties owned by State Parks around Saddle Mountain.
- **Little Basin:** Recommendations are added to provide a mixed Tribal use area with a cultural center for collaboration with Indigenous groups for stewardship, interpretation and cultural activities, and to provide staff housing.
- **Park Boundary:** Future acquisition parcels around Saddle Mountain would be added to the General Plan area.

The names in the General Plan differ from the names in the BBFMP in the following ways, which are considered synonymous:

- The General Plan uses Park Headquarters; the BBFMP uses Main Day-Use area.

- The General Plan uses the Park Headquarters and Sky Meadow planning area; the BBFMP uses zone names Old Growth Area, Overnight Area, and Upper Sky Meadow Area within this General Plan planning area.

The following sections contain specific proposed amendments to the text of the General Plan, with ~~strike through~~ and underline indicating text that is removed and added, respectively.

These changes to the Area-Specific Guidelines Section would also be made to where they are referenced in the Executive Summary and the Preferred Alternative Figures 18, 19 and 21.

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LOWER SKY MEADOW AMENDMENTS (Page 4-60)

Sky Meadow

The greater Sky Meadow area is comprised of the Lower Sky Meadow former residential area; and the Sky Meadow former group camp and surrounding areas, located on either side of a four-acre wet meadow; the Rogers Road site, which was a maintenance yard and staff residential facility until the 2020 CZU Fire; Upper Sky Meadow, which was a site of staff housing until the 2020 CZU Fire; and upper Lodge Road, which is a second growth redwood forest area with trails.

The structures providing at Lower Sky Meadow former residential area provided staff housing within the 1940s residential area are clustered in a flat grassy area surrounded to the north by remnant native perennial bunchgrasses and chaparral transitioning to a Douglas-fir and oak-dominated canopy. The south side of this developed area is bordered by mature coast live oak and well-spaced old growth redwoods and Douglas-fir.

A spur road off Sky Meadow Road provides access to the former group camp along a gentle ridge dominated by old growth redwood clumps, huge Douglas-fir (most of which died in the CZU Fire), and mature coast live oak and madrone. The first parking area for the former group camp sits below a wet swale where the forest floor is dominated by sedges, rushes and an uncommon occurrence of California fescue. Saturated soils are evidenced by several large uprooted trees. Sky Meadow itself is a wet meadow with rhizomatous sedges, rushes and large patches of California oat grass and Santa Barbara sedge. The perimeter is surrounded by clusters of redwoods, large coast live oaks and Santa Cruz Mountain oaks.

Lower Sky Meadow Goal: Protect and preserve historic residences and associated features and structures that contribute to the nominated National Register Historic District located in the Lower Sky Meadow residential area. Create a variety of overnight experiences for park visitors while protecting and enhancing the wet meadow area, and manage the surrounding old growth redwood and Douglas-fir forest habitats for resilience and future old growth structure.

Lower Sky Meadow Guidelines:

Lower Sky Meadow 1: Conduct site-specific surveys and investigations for sensitive plant and animal species protection, and coordinate with the Sempervirens Fund early in the site planning to locate new facilities and avoid with consideration for dedicated trees and memorial groves.

Lower Sky Meadow 2: Allow for development of additional overnight accommodations including car-camping, hard sided cabins, tent cabins, small group and larger group camp sites, staff housing, trailer pads, and amenities outside of the designated National Register boundaries of the Lower Sky Meadow residence area when addressing future housing needs, to maintain the historic integrity of this significant 1940s residence area to support overnight use including a campfire center, staff operations building, parking, a shuttle stop, a building with visitor facilities such as camping and cabin check-in and a store, trails, and other related amenities. Some overnight facilities and related amenities may be operated by a concessionaire.

Lower Sky Meadow 3: Provide a camper shuttle service to bring overnight campers from Lower Sky Meadow to the former Headquarters area without driving or parking in the former Headquarters area.

Lower Sky Meadow 4: Improve Sky Meadow Road to allow two-way public access and to install park utilities including widening the road or adding turnouts only where possible without impacting significant old growth redwood trees. Road improvements should be designed to improve safety of two-way public vehicle traffic, shuttle traffic, and bicycle and pedestrian traffic on the roadway and along trails parallel to the roadway while minimizing retaining walls and impacts to old growth trees.

Sky Meadow Group Camp area

Sky Meadow Group Camp Goal~~Lower Sky Meadow 5:~~ Provide for group expanded campgrounds and overnight recreation opportunities in and around the former group camps to replace the pre-CZU-Fire Blooms Creek and Sempervirens Campgrounds with new camping opportunities at Lower Sky Meadow, and preserve the wet meadow, and manage the surrounding old growth redwood and Douglas-fir forest habitats around these developed overnight areas for resilience and future old growth structure.

Sky Meadow Group Camp Guidelines:

Sky Meadow Group Camp 1~~Lower Sky Meadow 6:~~ Limit visitor use of the meadow to the existing historic Girl Scout camping platform and adjoining trail. Enhance, protect and pursue expansion of the wet meadow area.

Sky Meadow Group Camp 2~~Lower Sky Meadow 7:~~ Upgrade road access, construct new campground loop roads, upgrade parking and utilities infrastructure to support continued use of existing facilities expanded overnight uses.

Sky Meadow Group Camp 3~~Lower Sky Meadow 8:~~ Minimize disturbances to marbled murrelet breeding habitat by locating future visitor amenities outside the old growth forest away from most favorable habitat for breeding in the park.

Upper Sky Meadow Area

The Upper Sky Meadow Area also includes the Upper Sky Meadow site, the Rogers Road site and the Upper Lodge Road area. Before the 2020 CZU Fire, staff residences were located at Upper Sky Meadow, the primary maintenance yard and staff housing were located at the Rogers Road site, and the Upper Lodge Road area had road and trail uses.

Upper Sky Meadow Area Goal: Provide group camp and walk-in camping opportunities while managing forest for resilience and future old growth structure.

Upper Sky Meadow Area Guidelines:

Upper Sky Meadow Area 1: At Upper the Sky Meadow site, provide parking for walk-in camp sites, a restroom building, trails, and walk-in camp sites. Pursue restoration and interpretation of portions of the former Civilian Conservation Corps camp including the steps.

Upper Sky Meadow Area 2: At Rogers Road site, provide developed group recreation and group camp facilities including parking, a group camping area, restroom building, a ramada and cabins, and trails, while also managing vegetation for low fuel levels and pursuing opportunities for creek restoration, establishment of riparian vegetation and retention of stormwater where possible.

Upper Sky Meadow Area 3: Maintain the portion of Lodge Road that is within the State Park boundary for one-way emergency access and restrict vehicles on this road except administrative and emergency access.

Upper Sky Meadow Area 4: Provide trails and walk-in camping along Lodge Road above Upper Sky Meadow, including camping amenities and related facilities.

SADDLE MOUNTAIN AND HIGHWAY 236 AMENDMENTS (Page 4-61)

The Saddle Mountain property is located at the southern park boundary at the intersection of Highway 236 and Little Basin Road. This is the first park encounter for visitors arriving on Highway 236 from Highway 9 at Boulder Creek. The property includes older buildings and structures that remain from previous uses prior to state park ownership, and ~~are currently being~~ in the past have been used for an outdoor environmental education program under a short-term agreement with a nonprofit organization. The property location along Highway 236 and situated outside of the old growth forest presents an opportunity to create an important future park entry gateway that includes long-term park administrative and visitor serving facilities. It is one of the few sites available within state park ownership that would accommodate new development and uses to help reduce the high visitor use intensity occurring in the Headquarters area.

Management Intent

Through highway signing and development of new entrance facilities, Saddle Mountain property will be transformed into the primary visitor contact facility and gateway into Big Basin Redwoods SP headquarters area. The Highway 236 entrance from the north will continue to serve visitor and non-visitor traffic, viewed as a secondary access for most visitors (see Figure 19).

Saddle Mountain Goal: Establish a “front door” park entrance for primary visitor contact and park orientation on Highway 236 at the southern park boundary.

Saddle Mountain Guidelines:

Saddle Mountain 1: Develop a park welcome center for primary visitor contact, orientation, park information, and campground registration. Buildings and site development shall include provisions for park administration, offices, interpretation, restrooms, and parking for visitors and authorized vehicles. Other provisions that may be considered in the site planning and development include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A park visitor center with interpretive exhibits, park information, and space for park programs.
- Multi-purpose room that could be used for meetings, training, activities, or rented out for special event activities. This could be included in the welcome center or in a separate building designed for this and other uses listed below.
- Office, storage, warehouse, yard, maintenance, operations, and workshop space for administrative services and work areas for staff and other program volunteers.
- Interpretive sales area, gift shop, store, café, or other types of visitor services offered through a cooperating association and/or concessionaire, or nonprofit organization.
- Information kiosk or display panels providing public information when staff is unavailable.
- Day use picnic areas, with tables, shade, restrooms, and parking.

Saddle Mountain 2: Preserve and maintain the scenic quality of Highway 236 and establish appropriate “first impression” treatments that are compatible with the character of the park and create an attractive and welcoming park entry experience into Big Basin Redwoods SP.

Saddle Mountain 3: Develop a park shuttle/metro bus stop on Highway 236 and integrated into site development with adequate visitor parking. Provide additional parking to support a park shuttle system for visitor transport to other park areas during peak visitor use periods. Investigate shuttle operations implemented or proposed in other state, national, and local parks to help determine the required components and feasibility of implementing a shuttle system for Big Basin Redwoods SP.

Saddle Mountain 4: Consider provisions for trailhead parking at Saddle Mountain, and establish multi-use trail connections between Saddle Mountain, Little Basin, and Headquarters area, where possible.

Saddle Mountain 5: Preserve the meadow and open space qualities in the planning and design of future park facilities, and establish adequate vegetative screening and buffers between administrative and visitor activity areas, and between park development and adjacent properties.

Saddle Mountain 6: Conduct additional natural and cultural resource surveys, as necessary, to determine the presence of significant resources; implement protective measures, and interpret the site's history and important resources through effective interpretation methods and media dissemination.

Saddle Mountain 7: Develop and provide staff housing on properties owned by State Parks around Saddle Mountain to support emergency response, to provide housing to meet operational needs, and to replace housing lost in the CZU Fire. Develop and operate related staff areas and utilities needed to operate the park on park land around Saddle Mountain as appropriate to support park operations.

Saddle Mountain 8: Develop and provide a spike camp facility near Saddle Mountain or along Highway 236 with restrooms, water, parking and related amenities for use by conservation corps, park work crews, and partnering organizations to use for work associated with State Parks.

LITTLE BASIN AMENDMENTS (Page 4-70)

The Little Basin property was recently acquired in 2011 and added to Big Basin Redwoods SP. This planning zone is approximately 535 acres comprised of scenic woodlands and coast redwoods, and ~~includes~~ included a residence, maintenance shop, and developed 150-acre campground with several group-oriented recreation facilities before all facilities were lost in the 2020 CZU Fire. Little Basin ~~is~~ was a unique camping destination with campsites, cabins, ball fields, a tennis court, a basketball court, playground, picnic areas, open space meadows and miles of hiking trails that connect with the trail system in Big Basin. Access to the property is via Little Basin Road, a narrow 1.7 mile county road off Highway 236 and adjacent to the Saddle Mountain property. The Big Basin Headquarters area is approximately four miles from Little Basin. Initial resource surveys have been conducted and no sensitive natural resources have been identified. ~~Two~~ Significant archeological sites have been identified. However, no historic buildings or structures exist on this property.

Management Intent

The Little Basin facilities will be managed to provide for group recreation, environmental education, and special event opportunities with provisions for day use and overnight accommodations. A portion of Little Basin will be managed as a mixed Tribal use area for Indigenous stewardship and partnership with Indigenous groups for ceremony, restoration, cultural activities, and education and interpretation of Indigenous culture. ~~Initially, these facilities will be managed and operated by the nonprofit group United Camps, Conferences and Retreats (UCCR), under a concessions agreement scheduled through 2017. The~~ Recreational facilities at Little Basin may be operated by a ~~concessionaire is responsible to for managing~~ all aspects of the maintenance and support required to operate Little Basin as a first-class camping and recreational facility, which also ~~includes~~ may include but is not limited to maintaining the on-site water treatment plant and potable water distribution system, campground and recreation facility reservations, emergency access roads, and security. State Parks will provide ranger patrols and law enforcement as needed. Further site studies, resource monitoring and recreation surveys are needed, ~~to determine along with collaboration with Indigenous groups to develop plans to rebuild facilities for~~ the long-term management, development, and use of the Little Basin property (see Figure 21).

Little Basin Goal: *Establish a public day use and overnight recreation area for group use, and destination for special events.*

Little Basin Guidelines:

Little Basin 1: Upgrade, rebuild, and expand utility systems and infrastructure to support recreational activities, such as camping (including cabins), hiking, biking, horseback riding, ~~fishing~~, interpretive and group activities. Consider potential for expansion of recreation facilities and program needs for a ~~possible~~ cultural center and mixed Tribal use area ~~environmental education center.~~

Little Basin 2: ~~Upgrade~~ Rebuild and upgrade and/or modify existing facilities to satisfy operational needs and to meet ADA accessibility requirements.

Little Basin 3: Complete inventories and resource evaluations, and implement resource protection measures as necessary. Remove or relocate existing and former facilities, as necessary, to preserve and protect sensitive and significant natural and cultural resources. Collaborate with Indigenous groups to inform and lead important ecological and cultural restoration projects including meadow and wetland restoration and removing portions of roads, former sports and playground facilities, and other former infrastructure in key areas.

Little Basin 4: Interpret resource values, site history, and past use of Little Basin property.

Little Basin 5: Consider a concession-developed and operated overnight lodge with group dining facilities and additional cabins.

Little Basin 6: Coordinate with Santa Cruz County to identify any road improvements and county maintenance actions that may be necessary to maintain public vehicle access on Little Basin Road from Highway 236 to the Little Basin property and pursue improvements to Tanbark Loop Trail and Pine Mountain Road or other alternative routes to create a one-way emergency evacuation loop with Little Basin Road.

Little Basin 7: Create a mixed Tribal use area in collaboration with Indigenous groups including a cultural center building with parking for Indigenous stewardship with public educational and interpretation, training and work space, educational space and lodging for workers. Preserve the area surrounding cultural center for Indigenous-led interpretation for park visitors and collaborative uses led by Indigenous groups such as habitat restoration, cultural plant propagation, ceremony, cultural burning, camping, group gatherings and cultural activities.

Little Basin 8: Provide and maintain staff housing at Little Basin to support emergency response, to provide housing to meet operational needs, and to replace housing lost in the CZU Fire. Some of the housing at Little Basin may be provided as part of an agreement with Indigenous groups for operation of the mixed Tribal use area, and some as part of a concessionaire agreement.

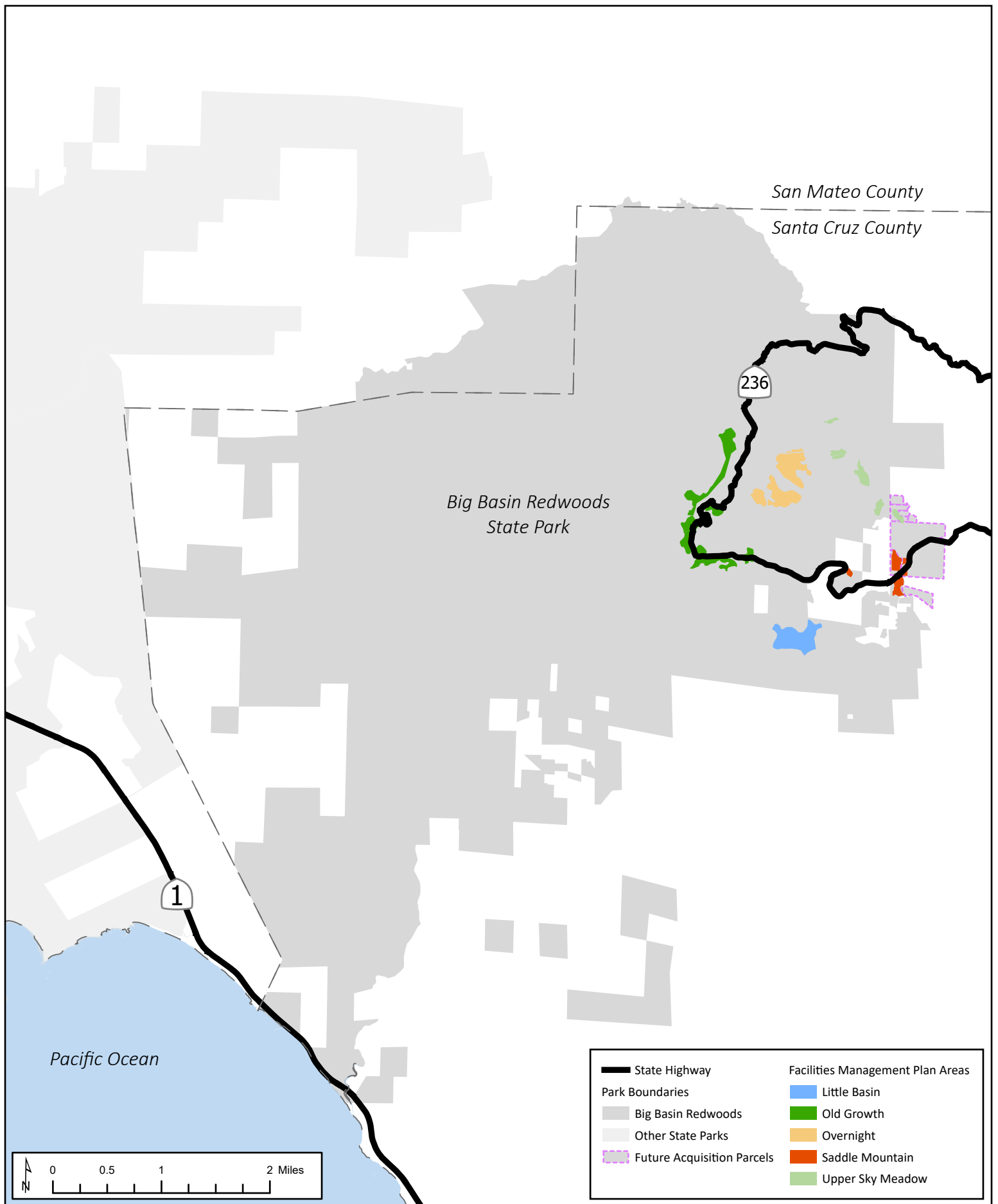


Figure 1: General Plan Area and Acquisition Parcels