Big Basin Redwoods

State Park



Our Mission

The mission of California State Parks 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.

California State Parks supports equal access. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at **(831) 338-8860**. If you need this publication in an alternate format, contact **interp@parks.ca.gov**.

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Sacramento, CA 94296-0001
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www.parks.ca.gov

Save The Redwoods LEAGUE

SaveTheRedwoods.org/csp

Big Basin Redwoods State Park
21600 Big Basin Way
Boulder Creek, CA 95006
(831) 338-8860

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"These trees, because of their size and antiquity, were among the natural wonders of the world and should be saved for posterity."

–Andrew P. Hill, 1899

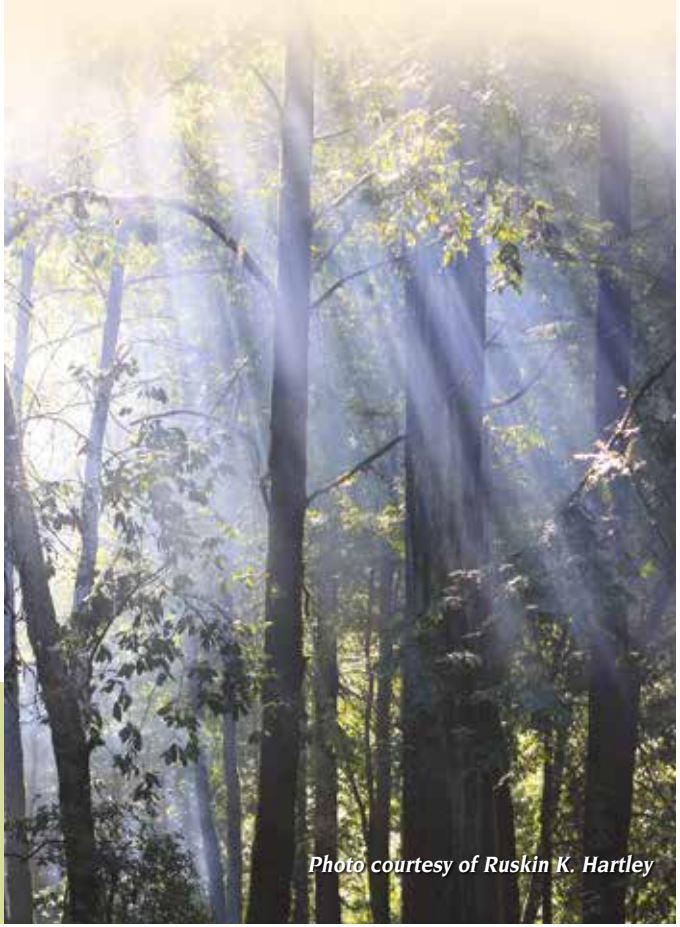


Photo courtesy of Ruskin K. Hartley

Big Basin Redwoods, California's oldest state park, covers more than 18,000 acres ranging from sea level to more than 2,000-feet elevation. This acreage launched the state park movement in California.

Big Basin's biggest attraction—literally—is a rare stand of awe-inspiring, ancient coast redwoods that are among the tallest and oldest trees on Earth. Some measure more than 300-feet tall and 50 feet in circumference. Scientists estimate that these trees may range from 1,000 to 2,500 years old.

Spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean, lush waterfalls, more than 80 miles of roads and trails, and a fascinating natural and cultural history have beckoned millions of visitors to Big Basin since 1902.

NATIVE PEOPLE

Humans lived in or near Big Basin for at least 10,000 years before the Spanish explored the area in the late 1700s. The Big Basin area was home to the Cotoni and Quiroste tribes, two of more than 50 tribes comprising the Ohlone culture of the San Francisco and Monterey Bay areas.

Grinding rocks, where Native People pounded acorns and other seeds into flour, are evidence that today's parkland served as the interior "food basket" for coastal people. They harvested seeds of grassland plants in the meadows and gathered soap root and other bulbs for food and other uses. Parts of willow, sedge, horsetail, and fern were used to create baskets. They hunted elk, pronghorns, and mule deer. The Quiroste and Cotoni used fire and other land-management practices to promote the growth of useful plants and maintain a healthy and productive ecosystem.

The Ohlone led resistance to the local Spanish mission influence in the late 1700s. Eventually, tribal culture collapsed in the face of contagious European diseases, natural-resource destruction, and the suppression of their native customs. Today, descendants of these tribes are working toward federal recognition and revitalizing their native traditions.



Sawmill, 1900

THE REDWOODS

Big Basin's coast redwoods, *Sequoia sempervirens*, are native to the United States; they grow only along the coast from southern Oregon to Central California. The name *Sequoia* may honor Sequoyah, the 19th-century inventor of the Cherokee alphabet, and *sempervirens* means "ever living." These trees are part of a once-huge ancient forest of which less than 5 percent remains. The redwood is California's official state tree.



Sempervirens Club with the famous Father of the Forest tree, 1901

The Santa Cruz redwood forest was first noted in accounts of a Spanish coastal expedition led by Gaspar de Portolá in 1769. Less than a century later, logging—to meet the demands of the Gold Rush and urban development—threatened to deplete the forest. By 1884, the area's 28 sawmills were annually processing more than 34 million board feet of lumber, as well as shingles, railroad ties, and posts.

PARK HISTORY

As logging continued, a battle to protect the ancient trees in the heart of Big Basin became the focus of citizens united to save the redwoods. Photographer Andrew P. Hill, journalist Josephine McCrackin, writer-publisher Carrie Stevens Walter, and a growing coalition of journalists, politicians, artists, businessmen, and scholars formed the Sempervirens Club in May of 1900.

As Walter wrote, "Once gone, no human power or ingenuity can replace them.

Even the most callous-minded materialist does not love to think of this swirling globe as a treeless place."

The Sempervirens Club enlisted and mobilized supporters throughout the state to join the race to pass legislation that would protect Big Basin's ancient redwoods. In March 1901, a State bill created California Redwood Park (renamed Big Basin Redwoods State Park in 1927).







The forest supports a variety of life. Top to bottom: false turkey tail fungus, western azalea, banana slug

In the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed the redwood Nature Lodge and Park Headquarters, a campfire center, footbridges, cabins, stoves, and a trail network.

Today, preservation of the park's natural wonders has returned to the forefront. The emphasis is preservation of the forest's entire ecology, with its significant geologic features, wildlife corridors, and massive watershed.

The park continues to grow through partnerships with private nonprofit groups such as Save the Redwoods League and the Sempervirens Fund.

NATURAL HISTORY

Ecology and Vegetation

Some redwoods measure more than 300-feet tall and 50 feet in circumference. However, with no taproot, redwood trees rely on a network of far-reaching roots about six-feet deep, intertwined with those of other redwoods. Soil compaction is a danger to these roots. Knobcone pine, Douglas-fir, red alder, madrone, chinquapin, and buckeye also grow here. The forest's tanoak tree bark once provided tannin for local leather tanneries. Huckleberry, azaleas, wild orchids, ferns, manzanita, Indian paintbrush, and poppies dot the park.

Wildlife, Geology, and Climate

Foxes, coyotes, and bobcats live throughout the park. Banana slugs feed on organic matter, plants, and mushrooms on the forest floor. Newts, lizards, and frogs are bountiful in the coast's damp, moist climate.

California quail, brown creepers, various woodpeckers, owls, and flickers are some common bird species found in the park.

Be alert for rattlesnakes, poison oak, and ticks. Use caution if you see a mountain lion; report aggressive encounters to park staff.

Geologically, the park's rock formations are a "Franciscan assemblage"—outcrops of serpentinite, basalt, limestone, ribbon chert, graywacke, sandstone, and shale.

Each season offers a different park experience. The intense greens of mosses contrast with the subtle colors of lichens and mushrooms during wet winters. Rushing waterfalls and wildflowers abound in the cool, foggy spring. Find a shady getaway from inland heat in summertime. Fall offers pleasant weather without storms, mosquitoes, or extreme heat.

Climate change affects the redwood forest. Coast redwoods receive much of their water and nutrients from fog drippings. A 2010 University of California, Berkeley study found that the coast now has 75 percent fewer foggy days than it did a century ago. Mature redwoods can survive, but fewer foggy days mean fewer seedlings mature into trees.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

A year-round activity schedule can be found on the park's website. The park's Nature Lodge Museum and the Visitor Center have natural and cultural exhibits. The coastal Rancho del Oso Nature and History Center offers exhibits and guided tours; call (831) 427-2288.

Camping—146 family campsites, four group camping sites, tent cabins, backcountry trail camps, and horse camping are available. For complete camping options and reservations, visit **www.parks.ca.gov/bigbasin** or call (800) 444-7275. For reservations to the



Interpretive programs at the campfire center

Rancho del Oso Horse Camp near Waddell Beach, call (831) 338-8861. For Little Basin Group Camp information, call (831) 338-3314.

Backpacking—Big Basin has five backcountry trail camps for backpackers. These trail camps are connected to a wider network of trails throughout Portola Redwoods State Park, Castle Rock State Park, and Butano State Park. This network of trail camps gives backpackers the chance to take multiday trips along the famed Skyline to the Sea Trail and beyond. Reservations and permits are required, and no dispersed camping is permitted. For information and reservations, visit **www.parks.ca.gov/scmtrailcamps**.

Trails—Big Basin's 80 miles of roads and trails introduce visitors not only to the redwoods, but to the park's different habitats and plants. Guided hikes are scheduled.



The easy stroller- and wheelchair-accessible Redwood Loop Trail winds a half-mile through the ancient redwood environment. Visitors can see Opal Creek, some of the larger old-growth trees, a redwood ring, and the giant Mother and Father of the Forest trees. Rated moderate, the Sequoia Trail passes spectacular Sempervirens Falls. A strenuous hike on the Berry Creek Falls Trail passes many of the largest old-growth redwood trees, Berry Creek, and its four waterfalls. The 33-mile Skyline to the Sea Trail runs from Castle Rock State Park through Big Basin to Waddell Beach at Rancho del Oso. During the winter, seasonal bridges on the Skyline to the Sea Trail are removed when Waddell Creek is high.



Sempervirens Falls

ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

Restrooms and showers are accessible. Parking, eight campsites, three tent cabins, the main picnic area, and several trails are accessible, as are the main Visitor Center, Park Headquarters, the Rancho del Oso Nature and History Center, and restrooms. See **http://access.parks.ca.gov** for details.

PLEASE REMEMBER

- All natural and cultural features in the park are protected by law and may not be disturbed or removed. Collecting is prohibited, including down wood.
- Purchase firewood from the park store or camp hosts.
- Be prepared for mosquitoes in summer.
- Feeding wildlife is prohibited by law.
- Be crumb clean! Please do not leave food out—not even a crumb. Use food lockers and don't leave any food unguarded.
- Dispose of all trash properly. Recycle glass, plastic, and aluminum.
- Except for service animals on a leash no longer than six-feet long, dogs are never allowed on any trails, unpaved service/fire roads, in any portion of Rancho del Oso, or on Waddell Beach.

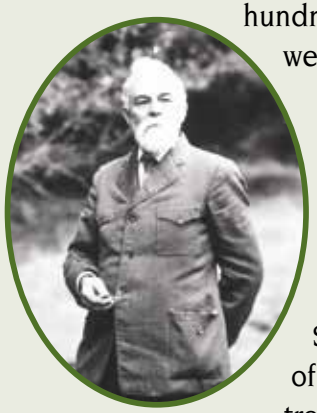
THE MARBLED MURRELET, a seabird about the size of a robin, is a redwoods inhabitant listed as endangered in California and threatened in the U.S. The murrelet nests high on a limb in the redwood canopy, hundreds of feet above ground. The bird travels up to 30 miles at dawn and dusk to feed on herring, smelt, or anchovies as it swims through the ocean. The murrelet parents trade off for morning and evening feeding; the mother hatches only one chick per year. Marbled murrelet eggs and babies are prey to the park's corvids—jays, crows, and ravens. They are first attracted to food or crumbs left by humans, and then the corvids notice the murrelet nests high in trees.



Photo Courtesy of Rich MacIntosh

BIG BASIN: CALIFORNIA'S OLDEST STATE PARK

The establishment of Big Basin Redwoods State Park in 1902 marked the beginning of the preservation and conservation movement in California and provided the vision for the hundreds of California state parks we enjoy today.



Andrew P. Hill self-portrait, 1915

In 1900, San Jose photographer Andrew P. Hill photographed the coast redwood trees in Felton Grove, now part of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. The then-owner of the forest accused Hill of trespassing and demanded his negatives. Hill refused and left, vowing to himself to save the trees for future generations and "make a public park of this place."

After a landmark meeting at Stanford University in May of 1900, Santa Cruz businessmen led Hill, journalists, and politicians on an excursion to Big Basin, an ancient forest threatened by logging. After three days of exploring the forest's wonders, the group elected officers and formed the Sempervirens Club.

The club and its growing team of supporters pushed the State Legislature to approve a bill to purchase the land. The bill passed unanimously. Thus was established California Redwood Park—known since 1927 as Big Basin Redwoods State Park.

Andrew P. Hill photographed much of the early history of Big Basin:



Father of the Forest redwood, ca. 1915



Sempervirens Club annual meeting, ca. 1915



Campfire benches and tents, ca. 1915

NEARBY STATE PARKS

Año Nuevo State Park
20 miles N of Santa Cruz on Hwy. 1
Pescadero 94060 (650) 879-2025

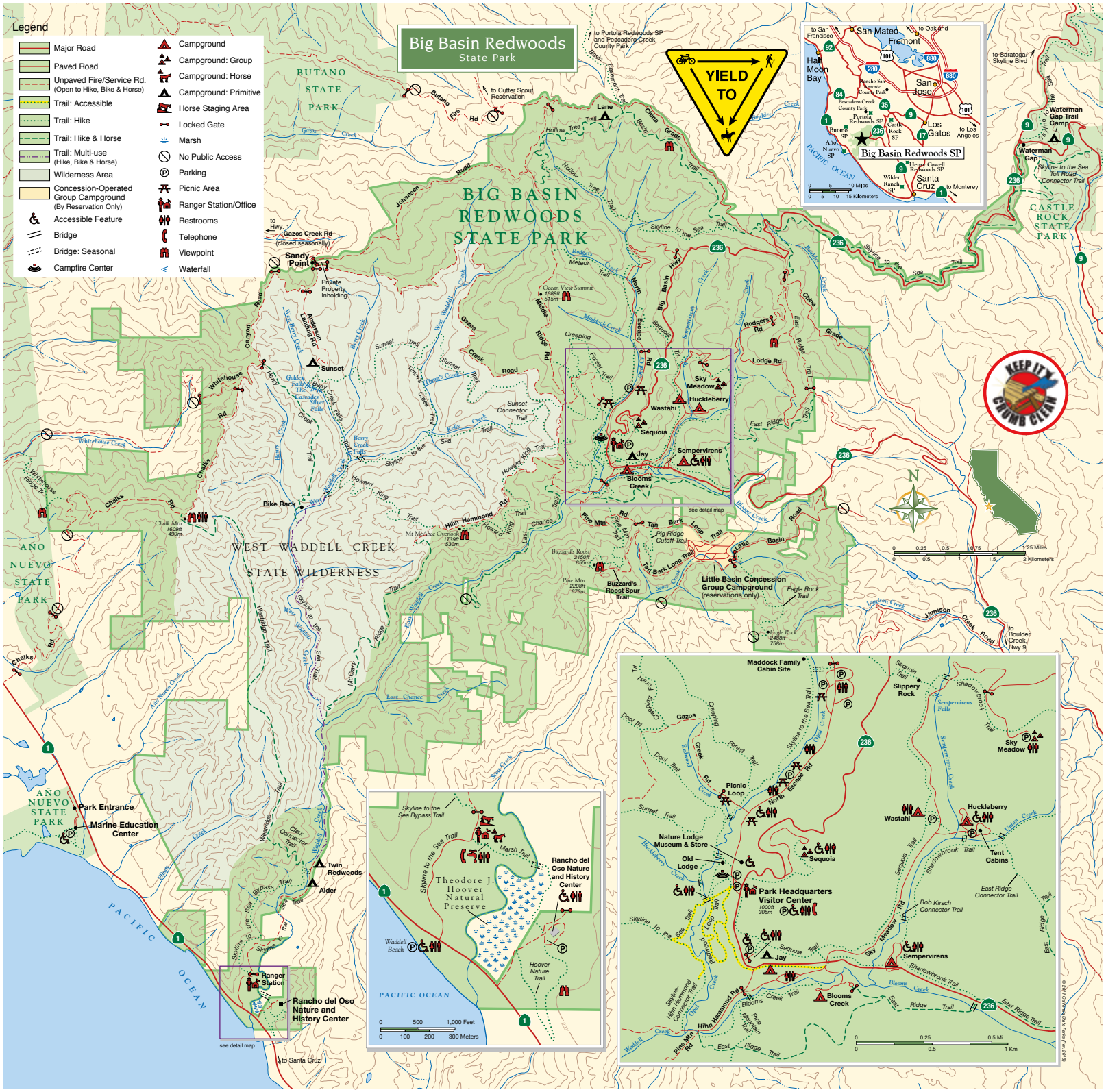
Butano State Park
1500 Cloverdale Road
Pescadero 94060 (650) 879-2040

Castle Rock State Park
15000 Skyline Blvd.
Los Gatos 95030
(408) 867-2952

This park receives support in part through two nonprofit organizations:

Mountain Parks Foundation (inland areas)
525 N. Big Trees Park Rd., Felton, CA 95018
(831) 335-3174 • **www.mountainparks.org**

Waddell Creek Association (Rancho del Oso)
3600 Highway 1, Davenport, CA 95017
(831) 427-2288 • **www.ranchodeloso.org**



Big Basin Redwoods
State Park
Legend
Major Road
Paved Road
Unpaved Fire/Service Rd. (Open to Hike, Bike & Horse)
Trail: Accessible
Trail: Hike
Trail: Hike & Horse
Trail: Multi-use (Hike, Bike & Horse)
Wilderness Area
Concession-Operated Group Campground (By Reservation Only)
Accessible Feature
Bridge
Bridge: Seasonal
Campfire Center
Campground
Campground: Group
Campground: Horse
Campground: Primitive
Horse Staging Area
Locked Gate
Marsh
No Public Access
Parking
Picnic Area
Ranger Station/Office
Restrooms
Telephone
Viewpoint
Waterfall
YIELD TO
BIG BASIN REDWOODS STATE PARK
BUTANO STATE PARK
CASTLE ROCK STATE PARK
AÑO NUEVO STATE PARK
WEST WADDELL CREEK STATE WILDERNESS
PACIFIC OCEAN
Sandy Point
Private Property Inholding
Gazos Creek Rd (closed seasonally)
Sunset
Bike Rack
Park Entrance
Marine Education Center
Twin Redwoods
Alder
Ranger Station
Rancho del Oso Nature and History Center
Sky Meadow
Huckleberry
Wastahi
Sequoia
Jay
Sempervirens
Blooms Creek
Little Basin Concession Group Campground (reservations only)
Buzzard's Roost Spur Trail
Waterman Gap
Waterman Gap Trail Camp
Skyline to the Sea Toll Road Connector Trail
Lane
Lodge Rd
Rodgers Rd
Gazos Creek
Whitehouse Creek
Chalks Rd
Hihn Hammond Rd
Jamison Creek Road
to Boulder Creek, Hwy 9
to Santa Cruz
see detail map
Theodore J. Hoover Natural Preserve
Skyline to the Sea Bypass Trail
Marsh Trail
Waddell Beach
Hoover Nature Trail
0 500 1,000 Feet
0 100 200 300 Meters
Maddock Family Cabin Site
Slippery Rock
Picnic Loop
Nature Lodge Museum & Store
Old Lodge
Park Headquarters Visitor Center
Tent Cabins
East Ridge Connector Trail
Bob Kirsch Connector Trail
Shadowbrook Trail
Sempervirens Falls
0 0.25 0.5 Mi
0 0.5 1 Km
San Mateo
Fremont
Half Moon Bay
San Jose
Los Gatos
Santa Cruz
Big Basin Redwoods SP
to San Francisco
to Oakland
to Los Angeles
to Monterey
to Saratoga/Skyline Blvd
0 5 10 Miles
0 5 10 15 Kilometers
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 1.25 Miles
0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Kilometers
KEEP IT CRUMB CLEAN