

# Living Landscape initiative

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## **Bay Area Conservation Groups Protect Largest Expanse of Threatened Redwoods and Wildlife Habitat in Heart of Santa Cruz Mountains**

### **8,532-acre CEMEX Redwoods Property near Davenport Preserved Forever Through Living Landscape Initiative Partnership**

*(Davenport, Calif.)*—Bay Area conservation organizations including the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County (LTSCC), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), Save the Redwoods League and Sempervirens Fund have joined forces to preserve the largest expanse of unprotected redwoods and wildlife habitat in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The 8,532-acre property, known as CEMEX Redwoods, is the largest private landholding in Santa Cruz County. Blanketed in dense coast redwood and Douglas-fir and sculpted by four creeks flowing to the sea, the land is rich in natural resources, scenic beauty and recreation potential.

CEMEX Redwoods is located near the site of the former CEMEX cement plant overlooking the small coastal town of Davenport. The massive property extends from gently rolling hillsides along Highway 1 through steep, forested slopes reaching all the way to the ridgeline along Empire Grade Road. Conservation of the property will link 26,000 acres of contiguous protected lands and provide a critical wildlife linkage in the face of growing impacts on habitat from climate change.

#### **Saving a Living Landscape**

The \$30 million purchase of CEMEX Redwoods is the first major project to result from the Living Landscape Initiative ([livinglandscapeinitiative.org](http://livinglandscapeinitiative.org)), a

collaboration launched earlier this year by the five conservation groups. The goal of the Initiative is to protect 80,000 acres of land in and around Silicon Valley over the next 20 years within four areas of focus: Coastal Lands, Redwood Heartland, Pajaro River Corridor, and Essential Links.

The CEMEX Redwoods property falls within the Initiative's Redwood Heartland focus area, bringing much-needed protection to this type of threatened landscape. Funding toward the purchase comes from a variety of sources, including a combined \$8 million from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation provided through Resources Legacy Fund's Living Landscape Initiative Challenge Grant Program. The Packard Foundation is also providing a \$2.5 million low-interest loan to Sempervirens Fund to help finance the acquisition through the foundation's Program-Related Investment Program. In addition, The San Francisco Foundation has contributed \$150,000 to the project.

The property is the largest acquisition to date for POST, Sempervirens Fund and the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County. "Saving CEMEX Redwoods from potential subdivision and development is an historic opportunity for all the partners within the Living Landscape Initiative," said POST President Walter T. Moore. "With a property this big right in the heart of the Santa Cruz Mountains, we have a rare opportunity to ensure the viability of redwoods in our region, as well as healthy wildlife habitat and watershed lands. This project is sure to serve as a catalyst for future redwood habitat protection in the region, and it can't come a moment too soon."

"These groups seized the chance to protect one of the largest remaining expanses of redwoods and wildlife habitat right at our doorstep. We leveraged each other's expertise to save this one-of-a-kind place for the benefit of generations to come," said Reed Holderman, executive director of Sempervirens Fund.

### **Partnership Leverages Strengths**

The acquisition of CEMEX Redwoods is the first phase of an innovative project developed by the partnering groups to provide a multitude of conservation benefits. The second phase of the project will involve placement of

a conservation easement on the land to provide permanent protection of the property's old-growth redwoods and wildlife habitat, as well as to preserve water quality and ensure eventual public access. The groups anticipate that in the third phase, the property might be sold to a private party pursuant to a sustainable working forest agreement that will maintain the health of the forest and provide local tax revenues and jobs. "The agreement will include a plan for sustainable harvest of some of the timberland while assuring the preservation of critical redwoods, fish and wildlife habitat, and essential local sources of drinking water," said Terry Corwin, executive director of the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County.

Each of the groups is playing a vital role at different phases of the project. POST and Sempervirens Fund are acquiring title to the property as of December 16 and helping to cover the \$30 million acquisition cost up front, with POST contributing \$16 million and Sempervirens Fund, \$5 million (including the aforementioned \$2.5 million loan from the Packard Foundation). In addition, The Nature Conservancy is providing a \$500,000 grant from its Central Coast Opportunity Fund, created by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation to support conservation along the Central Coast. Save the Redwoods League and LTSCC will acquire the easement on the property and make sure rare reserves of old-growth redwoods are identified and properly preserved. Ultimately, POST, Sempervirens Fund, Save the Redwoods League and LTSCC will share equally in the costs of protecting the land.

### **A Concrete Plan for Conservation**

The previous owner of the property, CEMEX, is one of the world's largest building materials suppliers and one of the largest producers of cement in North America. The conservation groups are buying the forested uplands of the CEMEX property, including a former quarry site. The cement plant along Highway 1 that CEMEX shut down last year and a second, associated quarry are not part of the conservation purchase. With CEMEX's decision to close its cement plant operation, the company wanted to find appropriate parties to maintain the property's natural value.

“Sustainability is integrated into our day-to-day operations and decision-making processes worldwide, and CEMEX is proud of our longstanding commitment to biodiversity and wilderness protection,” said Karl Watson, Jr., president of CEMEX USA. “CEMEX is very pleased to have the opportunity to work with conservation groups in the Bay Area so they may continue responsible environmental stewardship of this unique ecosystem.”

A succession of cement production companies had owned the property since at least 1906, when the San Francisco earthquake spurred a rebuilding boom in the Bay Area. The town of Davenport was founded as a company town, built by the first producer on the site, the Santa Cruz Portland Cement Company, to house workers near its quarry operations.

Some development scenarios suggested that the 8,532-acre property could be carved up to accommodate construction of up to 69 luxury housing units. Fortunately, the nonprofit groups coming together to save this land now will craft a conservation plan to ensure permanent protection of the property’s extraordinary natural resources and recreation potential. “Part of the vision for the property is to establish scientifically planned redwood reserves and restore water quality and fish and wildlife habitat,” said Ruskin K. Hartley, executive director of Save the Redwoods League. “Through diligent stewardship, old forest habitat can remain protected while facilitating growth and development of younger stands of trees and reducing the impact of commercial harvest.”

“The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, along with the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and Resources Legacy Fund, is proud to support the land trusts within the Living Landscape Initiative and the mutual goals they have set for conservation in our area,” said Moore Foundation president Steve McCormick. “With the purchase of CEMEX Redwoods, the Initiative is living up to its great promise. It’s an innovative, exciting collaboration that will continue to deliver great conservation results in and around Silicon Valley for years to come.”

**About the Living Landscape Initiative:**

*The Living Landscape Initiative is a collaborative effort among five land conservation organizations in and around Silicon Valley. Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, The*

*Nature Conservancy, Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), Save the Redwoods League and Sempervirens Fund are all working together to protect the unique natural benefits and striking beauty that nourish the area's social and economic vitality. By creating a sustainable living landscape, the Initiative seeks to enhance our lives by promoting clean air and water, local farming and working lands, biodiversity and habitat protection for wildlife, and public enjoyment of natural lands. To learn more, visit [www.livinglandscapeinitiative.org](http://www.livinglandscapeinitiative.org).*

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## **CEMEX Redwoods Fact Sheet**

- 8,532 acres in size; \$30 million purchase price
- Fee title to be acquired December 16 by Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) and Sempervirens Fund, in partnership with Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, Save the Redwoods League and The Nature Conservancy.
- Comprises the largest expanse of intact unprotected redwoods and wildlife habitat in the Santa Cruz Mountains.
- Contains Laguna Creek, a critical supply of drinking water for the city of Santa Cruz, and the headwaters of San Vicente Creek, sole source of drinking water for the town of Davenport.
- Includes hundreds of old, large coast redwoods and Douglas-firs that may support populations of federally threatened marbled murrelet.
- Site of more than 70 miles of unpaved roads with outstanding potential for public recreational access.
- Includes 6,720 acres of coast redwood and Douglas-fir forest representing almost 5 percent of this type of forest in Santa Cruz County and almost 12 percent of the county's productive forest land.
- Includes 1,271 acres of live oak forest, including rare Oracle and Shreve oak, large Pacific madrones, and endangered Anderson's manzanita.
- Home to two animal species found nowhere else in the world: the Mount Hermon June beetle and the Zayante band-winged grasshopper.
- Critical habitat for known populations of threatened and endangered animal species, including Coho salmon, steelhead trout, California red-legged frog, mountain lion and peregrine falcon.
- Home to four federally endangered plant species, including Ben Lomond spineflower, Santa Cruz wallflower, Ben Lomond buckwheat and Bonny Doon manzanita.
- A potential ecological refuge against impacts of climate change in the Santa Cruz Mountains thanks to high elevation, proximity to the coast, extensive microclimates, ecological niches, perennial water sources and north-facing slopes.
- The largest property acquisition in the history of POST, Sempervirens Fund and the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County.