

SOQUEL DEMONSTRATION STATE FOREST

The demonstration state forest system was established in the mid-1940's to furnish local needs of research, demonstration, and education related to forest management. Currently, the demonstration state forest (DSF) system encompasses over 71,000 acres of land in the form of eight state forests. DSFs are healthy, living forests which demonstrate conservation and protection of wildlife, fisheries, vegetation, soil, and watershed resources as well as sustained-yield forest management activities.

Soquel Demonstration State Forest is located in the center of Santa Cruz County, California, approximately eight miles northeast of the city of Santa Cruz. Virtually all of the Forest's 2,681 acres are located within the East Branch of Soquel Creek watershed.

SDSF's boundaries were originally established by metes and bounds rather than the more familiar township and range system. Formerly part of the Soquel Augmentation Rancho (a Mexican land grant), this area has always been defined differently than the land which surrounds it. The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park borders the State Forest for three and one-half miles along Santa Rosalia Ridge to the south. On the southwest border is the property containing the Olive Springs Quarry.

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Costanoan (also known as Ohlone) Indians inhabited the area. In the mid-1800's, the title to the 32,000-acre Soquel Augmentation Rancho was awarded to Martina Castro de Depeaux viuda de Lodge viuda de Cota, the daughter of a Spanish Colonial soldier. SDSF was contained within the rancho, and Martina gave this portion to her daughter, Antonia Lodge de Peck. Frederick A. Hihn, a German-born entrepreneur, was able to acquire portions of the Soquel Augmentation through a discrepancy in legal title. He was particularly interested in Lodge de Peck's parcel and purchased it in 1863.

In the 1880's, Hihn established the Valencia-Hihn Company and began selectively logging the old-growth redwood on his lands to produce shingles, posts, and rails. Upon his death in 1913, Hihn's heirs assumed management of his lands and continued to harvest the area. In 1924, the Valencia-Hihn Company sold their land to the Monterey Bay Redwood Company (MBRC). The MBRC owned the State Forest property for 37 years and performed extensive harvest in the 1920's and '30's. They sold their property to the Glenco Forest Products Company of Sacramento in 1961, which later changed its name to the CHY Company. Eighteen years later, in 1979, CHY sold the State Forest portion of their land to the Pelican Timber Company.

In 1988, Pelican was involved in a debt-for-nature land swap with the State of California and the Bank of America. A result of this land swap was the creation of SDSF as authorized by former Assemblyman Sam Farr's Assembly Bill 1965. The Nature Conservancy acted as the interim managers of the Forest until its transfer to CAL FIRE in 1990.

On March 7, 1988, State Controller Gray Davis and the Bank of America settled a thirteen-year long lawsuit over unclaimed bank accounts. The settlement included \$35.7 million in cash and four undeveloped natural parcels in Tehama and Sonoma Counties. The property that is now SDSF was acquired during the settlement process and added to the package.

The settlement properties are held in a trust with the State as the beneficial owner and the Bank of Tehama County and the Bank of California as co-trustees. The properties can be sold to pay unclaimed funds if they exceed the \$35.7 million in cash set aside for this purpose. It is doubtful, however, that this will ever happen.

At the time of the settlement, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) volunteered to act as steward for these properties. A 25-year lease was developed which stated that TNC would manage these properties and that past land use practices could continue. Any revenues generated from these activities were to pay for property taxes, operations and maintenance, natural resource enhancement, and access improvement projects.

The Nature Conservancy transferred their lease of the Santa Cruz county property (now SDSF) to CAL FIRE on April 18, 1990. CAL FIRE assumed management at that time and a dedication ceremony for SDSF was held on July 13, 1990. At the end of the 25-year lease, the property will be transferred permanently to the State, free and clear.

Under the terms of the lease, both the co-trustees and the Controller have certain rights and responsibilities. The trustees' primary responsibility is to monitor the lessee's performance as managers of the properties. The Controller is responsible for the sale of any or all the properties in the event that cash assets are insufficient to satisfy all claims.

Former Assemblyman Sam Farr authored SDSF's enabling legislation, Assembly Bill 1965 of 1987 (now Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 4660-4664), which provided for the protection and preservation of the SDSF as an intensively managed educational and research forest, and contained special provisions for the use of SDSF, including a limited amount of commercial timber operations on the property within the SDSF in order to provide funds for the maintenance and operation of SDSF, reasonable capital costs, and other expenses incurred in fulfilling the objectives of PRC Section 4660 on SDSF.

SDSF's management goals represent a combination of legislation, policy, and public input. PRC Sections 4660-4664, the enabling legislation for Soquel Demonstration State Forest, is the preeminent authority with regard to the management of the SDSF. Consistent with the objectives of that legislation to protect and preserve SDSF as an intensively managed, multifaceted research forest and to the extent not in conflict with that enabling legislation, the SDSF will be managed in accordance with the state forest system legislation (PRC Sections 4631-4658) and Board of Forestry policy.

Public Resources Code Section 4660 states that the intent of the Legislature in establishing the Soquel Demonstration State Forest is to provide an environment that will do all of the following:

- * Provide watershed protection for local communities and baseline monitoring and studies of the hazards, risks, and benefits of forest operations and watersheds to urban areas.
- * Provide public education and examples illustrating compatible rural land uses, including sustained yield timber production, as well as the historic development of timbering and forestry machinery, within the context of local community protection and nearby pressures.
- * Provide a resource for the public, environmental groups, elected officials, environmental planners, the educational community, and the media as an open environment for the inspection and study of environmental education, forestry practices, and effects thereof.
- * Protect old-growth redwood trees.

Section 4661 further states that the CAL FIRE may permit a limited amount of commercial timber harvesting in order to provide the funds needed for the maintenance and operation expenses of SDSF, reasonable capital costs, and other expenses incurred in fulfilling the objectives of PRC Sections 4660-4664 on SDSF.

The legislation which created SDSF (AB 1965) called for the establishment of an advisory committee to assist with the development of SDSF's General Forest Management Plan. A main function of the committee is to act as a critical link between Cal Fire and the community in the planning effort. The Advisory Committee has nine members appointed by the Director. Five positions were specified by the legislation and four were added by the Director. The committee consists of one representative from each of the following:

- * State Board of Forestry
- * Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
- * California Department of Parks and Recreation
- * California Department of Fish and Game
- * The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park Citizens Advisory Committee
- * The Nature Conservancy
- * Soquel Creek Water District
- * Neighborhood Representative
- * Local Registered Professional Forester