

# The Redwood Report

Big Basin Redwood & Año Nuevo State Parks

4 February 2025

*O! say  
can you  
see ...*

## *Survivors*

A group of redwoods that survived the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex fire in Big Basin Redwoods State Park stand tall against the winter sky.

# O! say can you see ...

SOURCES: Underlined words link to them.

**F**ive years ago, my last full year at the *Silicon Valley Business Journal* before retiring, a dry lightning storm erupted the night of August 15-16 over the Santa Cruz (holy cross) Mountains, a subset of the longer chain of mountains along most of North America's Pacific Coast. Eleven thousand lightning bolts were generated by the storm, counted by the National Lightning Detection Network. About 300 struck the ground in San Mateo (St Matthew) and Santa Cruz (holy cross) counties west and south of San Jose.

Although I covered what came to be known as the CZU Lightning Complex Fire that resulted when wind shifts pushed smaller fires together into one giant conflagration, what I wrote about was the damage to the many family-owned vineyards and wineries in those mountains because I was writing for a business-focused publication.

Nevertheless, in my mind was one of my favorite places to visit, Big Basin Redwoods State Park, California's first state park, dedicated to preserving some of Earth's tallest trees. It was in the center of that fire, which burned for 37 days over 134 square miles / 350 square kilometers. I couldn't imagine a forest of trees that reach middle age in their 10<sup>th</sup> century being wiped out in days.

Well, it wasn't.

Every single picnic table, every park building from outhouse to museum and headquarters, was destroyed along with the homes of rangers and their belongings.

But the trees are still there — scarred, of course — but not for the first time in their lives (see the next two pages).

Things that are rare and disastrous in human lifespans are the headache and common cold of redwoods' lives. The bark of some trees is two feet / 0.6 meters thick, enough to insulate the almost sap-free interior from bugs, fungi and most fires short of severely hellish.

The new forest management plan adopted last August for Big Basin and its neighbor redwood parks actually calls for less fire suppression than in the past. Human fire suppression allowed an unnatural amount of plant fuel to accumulate on the forest floor, forestry experts said, setting the stage for huge fires like that in 2020. Smaller controlled burns are planned for the future (see this YouTube video).

The second reign of self-proclaimed stable genius King Donald could change that, however. He has spoken admiringly in the past about a previously unknown (and still denied) army of Finnish forest floor sweepers who prevent that heavily forested — and, for a third of the year, snow-covered — nation from suffering the kind of wildfires so common in arid California.

After national forest wildfires engulfed large portions of Los Angeles in January, His Majesty posted on Truth, the social media outlet he owns, on Jan. 27 that he had sent his military into California, which "TURNED ON THE WATER flowing abundantly from the Pacific Northwest, and beyond." California's water systems are not known to be connected to the Pacific Northwest. LA officials denied receiving any new water.

But the online publication *SJV Water*, based in the heavily agricultural San Joaquin Valley, reported that on Jan. 30, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released farmer-owned water stored in two Tulare County lakes. Surprised local officials were able to get it turned off before summer irrigation supplies were seriously depleted. "He (President Trump) has no idea how bad he effed up," Brian Watte, who farms 2,000 acres and is a member of the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District Board, told the publication.



*16 years ago*

In January 2009, I was shooting pictures in Big Basin and got these visitors coming out of a fire-scarred redwood.



## *Earlier this week*

I found the same tree you see on the previous page a bit worse for wear but still alive and standing.

## *Bursting cones*

Fire helps redwoods reproduce. Many of the mature trees at Big Basin are surrounded by redwood undergrowth because fire causes their cones to open and release their seeds.





*Enjoying winter moisture*

Moss-covered trees inhabit an unburned redwood forest on La Honda Road near Woodside. I took that scenic road over the Santa Cruz Mountains on my way to Big Basin.