

SOQUEL
DEMONSTRATION
STATE FOREST



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SDSF Newsletter



SUMMER 2015

Welcome to the SDSF Newsletter!

The Soquel Demonstration State Forest is one of eight Demonstration State Forests managed by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), located in the beautiful Soquel mountains near Santa Cruz. It contains 2700 acres of redwood, mixed hardwoods, riparian, and chaparral ecosystems. The East Branch of Soquel Creek and parts of Amaya and Fern Gulch Creeks flow through this working forest.

It's been a hot, dry summer here in the Santa Cruz mountains, as in the rest of California. The drought makes effective forest management all the more important, whether it's creating a shaded fuel break, monitoring stream temperature, or protecting habitat for wildlife species that are already struggling with the dry conditions.



The East Branch of Soquel Creek provides a cool oasis even in the hottest days of summer.

Defending the Forest: One Shaded Fuel Break at a Time



This summer, SDSF has contracted with crews from the California Conservation Corps (CCC) to continue working on the shaded fuel break that extends 50 feet on either side of Hihn's Mill Road, and will soon begin working on Sulphur Springs Road, provided their availability. These crews picked up where the Ben Lomond Conservation Camp crews left off last summer.

In order to make the Forest more defensible to wildfire, crews remove flammable dead and down vegetation, either by chipping or bucking and stacking, depending on

size. Overhanging branches and brush are also removed. This treatment serves to remove or weaken the "fuel ladder," preventing fire from climbing to the canopy and spreading rapidly. A road that has been treated with a shaded fuel break is more likely to be an effective and safe access route during a fire, and may slow or even stop the fire's spread.

To date, approximately five miles of road have been treated. Next time you notice stacks of wood on the side of the road, or wood chips spread across the ground, know that hard work has been put into protecting the Forest and all of its visitors.

Joke Corner

Q1: What's a tree's favorite instrument?

Q2: How do trees get on the internet?

Did you know?

In the late 1870's, Frederick Hihn, who at the time owned most of what is now SDSF, developed a resort at Sulphur Springs known as "Precioso Sulphur Springs." The resort provided cold and hot sulphur baths for guests, and a hotel to stay in, until its closure in the 1920s.



Forestry Aide Meredith Jacobson demonstrates good chain-saw form while helping remove a downed tree obstructing Sawpit Trail .

Enjoying the Ride!

SDSF's new trail, the Flow Trail, was completed this spring and the Forest is more popular than ever. The last of the Flow Trail's six segments were opened and an opening day celebration was hosted in the Badger Springs picnic area in May with over 200 guests attending. The completed trail is now about 3.5 miles long, the longest downhill ride in the forest. SDSF has also seen record numbers of visitors riding on weekend days, with mountain bikers coming from all over the country to experience the Flow.



Forest Manager Angela Bernheisel addresses the crowd at Badger Springs for the opening of the Flow Trail.



In other trail news, Mountain Bikers of Santa Cruz organized volunteer work days to re-route a section of Corral Trail.

Before setting out for a mountain biking ride at SDSF make sure you are prepared, and know your route. SDSF is remote and it can take a long time for help to arrive if needed. Ride within your limits. The increased traffic and trail use presents new safety concerns, so exercise caution when approaching road or trail intersections. Always carry extra water, and having a repair kit is never a bad call. Have fun out there!

Comstock Mill Timber

The Comstock Mill Timber Harvest was completed in June, bringing in solid revenue for the Forest. All of the logs were sold to Big Creek Lumber Company in Davenport, so you might find wood products made from SDSF trees in a store near you! Profits from all State Forest timber harvests go into the Forest Resource Improvement Fund (FRIF) which then is used for State Forest management, funding restoration projects, education, road maintenance, and everything in between.

Staff are now preparing for the next timber sale, with timber scheduled to be harvested in Summer 2016. The SDSF General Forest Management Plan calls for an annual timber harvest of 800,000 to 900,000 board feet, with each harvest covering approximately 10% of the Forest's area.

Comstock Mill THP: by the numbers

Completion date	June 2015
Board feet harvested	2.1 million (Enough lumber to build 70 single family homes!)
Revenue	\$920,000
Acres harvested	228
Silviculture method	Single-tree selection
Timber Purchaser	Big Creek Lumber Company
Timber Operator	Lonestar Timber Harvesting



Unwanted Visitors - Invasives in our Midst

Visitors of many kinds are welcome at SDSF, but a different, more menacing visitor is present in the Forest: invasive plant species. Invasive species often outcompete native species, taking over large areas very quickly and altering the native ecosystem. This can have adverse effects on wildlife habitat or general forest health. There are a number of invasives present in SDSF.

Among the most virulent of these are French broom, jubata grass, eupatory, yellow star thistle, and bull thistle. These plants are often spread from one sight to another through vehicle and bike tires, on clothing, and other equipment.



A flowering French broom plant, which is found all across SDSF.

To respond to the spread of these plants, Forest staff are working on an invasive database by GPS-locating all areas with these species and identifying priority areas for removal. This project was started in 2007, and many of the plant populations documented at the time have since been removed - hard work pays off! However, the effort is ongoing and requires perseverance. To help, you can pull these species wherever you see them and if you see one of our staff working on a patch, feel free to lend a hand.



Jubata grass (*Cortaderia jubata*)



Eupatory (*Ageratina adenophora*)



Yellow star thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*)



Bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*)



Engaging the Public

We love educating our visitors about the Forest, and forest management in general. Every year, our staff participates in the Santa Cruz Forestry Challenge, an annual event aimed to engage local students in forestry and environmental management. This summer we have had two school groups visit to learn about the Forest and what we do as foresters. In coordination with researchers at UC Berkeley, our staff is also working on a new interpretive program for personal devices to help guide visitors through the Forest and learn along the way.



Forestry Aide Hannah Miller explaining sustainable timber harvest practices to a group of visiting high school students.

Joke Corner Answers!

A1: A xylophone

A2: They log on!

What is forestry?

Forestry is the practice and science of creating, managing, using, and restoring forests to meet desired objectives, needs, and values.

In California, only **Registered Professional Foresters** can practice forestry and administer **Timber Harvest Plans (THPs)**. Foresters must abide by the California Forest Practice Rules, which are updated annually. In addition to these rules, Demonstration State Forests follow the specifications and guidelines in their **General Forest Management Plans**. SDSF's General Forest Management Plan can be accessed on our website: see the link below.



Banana slugs enjoy riding the Flow Trail too, albeit at a slightly slower pace.



SOQUEL DEMONSTRATION STATE FOREST

SAN MATEO - SANTA CRUZ UNIT



Part of SDSF's mission is to protect all old growth trees within the Forest. This is ensured by tagging every old growth tree within a timber harvest plan area, and adding it to a GIS database.

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