

United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area Historic District

Name of Property Santa Cruz, California

County and State 14000662

NR Reference Number

Request to Delist the Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area Historic District (NPS #14000662)

Historic Context

DRAFT

The Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area Historic District was listed on the National Register in 2014 at the state level of significance under Criterion A for its association with development in Big Basin Redwoods State Park and in California State Parks. Lower Sky Meadow was the first residential complex built in a California state park between 1941 and 1955, an era when the construction of employee housing in California state parks became a priority and standardized plans were utilized in the parks for the first time. At the time of listing, Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area was the largest and most intact example of a California State Parks housing development built during this period. The historic district was also listed at the state level of significance under Criterion C, for its representation of minimal traditional architecture in California State Parks. The Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area Historic District met the criteria for listing as defined in the *Historic Resources of Big Basin Redwoods State Park* Multiple Property Documentation Form, with a period of significance 1942 to 1949 when the resources were built.

Current Physical Description

Due to the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex wildfire, the district was nearly destroyed. The tree-lined Lower Sky Meadow Lane and Residence 10 are all that remains of the historic district. These limited resources do not convey the historic neighborhood that was, or its association with the development of Big Basin State Park or the California State Parks system for which it was listed under Criterion A. The district no longer possesses the standardized minimal traditional character defining features that made it eligible for listing under Criterion C.

Request

Pursuant to 36 CFR § 60.15 (a) (1), the property owner, California State Parks, requests the removal of the Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area Historic District from the National Register of Historic Places on the grounds that, “The property has ceased to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register because the qualities which caused it to be originally listed have been lost or destroyed.”

Evidence of demolition is included in the accompanying correspondence from the property owner. Residence 10 will be retained and may be eligible as an individual resource under cover of a Multiple Property Submission in development for post-World War II state park architecture. The residential area, re-categorized as a site, will be locally designated as a California Point of Historical Interest.

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State Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this ___ additional documentation ___ additional documentation: name change
___ move ___ removal ___ other
meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

Signature of Certifying Official/Title

Date of Action

Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this ___ additional documentation ___ additional documentation: name change
___ move ___ removal ___ other
meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

Signature of Certifying Official/Title

Date of Action

National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ additional documentation accepted
___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



August 28, 2023

Julianne Polanco
State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95816

Re: Delisting Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area Historic District (NR# 14000662), Santa Cruz County

Dear Ms. Polanco:

With sadness, the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) is requesting the Big Basin Redwoods State Park Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area Historic District be removed from the National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historical Places. On August 16, 2020, the CZU Lightening Complex tore through Big Basin Redwoods State Park destroying almost all the facilities within the park, including all but one building in Lower Sky Meadow. The tree lined road and Residence 10 are all that remains of the historic district (see attached photographs). Thankfully, no lives were lost and all park staff and visitors were safely evacuated.

California State Parks designed and constructed the Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area between 1941 and 1949 to provide staff housing within the park. Located in the only naturally open and sunny site in the dense redwood forest park, the neighborhood contained seven single-story, wood frame standard plan houses and three shared garages in the minimal traditional style of architecture (see Figure 1). In 2014, Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places at the state level of significance under Criterion A for its association with development in Big Basin Redwoods State Park and with the system of California State Parks more generally. Lower Sky Meadow was the first residential complex built in a California state park between 1941 and 1955, an era when the construction of employee housing in California state parks became a priority and standardized plans were utilized in the parks for the first time. Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area was the largest and most intact example of a California State Park housing development built during this period.

The historic district was also listed at the state level of significance under Criterion C, for its representation of minimal traditional architecture in California State Parks. Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area met the criteria for listing as defined in the Historic Resources of

Big Basin Redwoods State Park Multiple Property Documentation Form, with a period of significance 1942 to 1949 when the resources were built. Please refer to the nomination on file for a detailed description of the district prior to the fire.

Unfortunately, the fire destroyed the vast majority of the historic district. The remaining features (Residence 10, see Figure 2; Sky Meadow Lane and trees) cannot convey the historic neighborhood that was, or its association with the development of Big Basin State Park or the California State Park system for which it was listed under Criterion A on the National Register of Historical Places. As a collection of houses, Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area demonstrated both the focus on park development, the importance of housing for staff in areas where housing was hard to acquire or too expensive for staff to afford, and the application of standard plans in state parks. The burnt and badly damaged foundations, retaining walls, and pathways were removed during hazardous waste cleanup from the fire (see Figures 3 and 4). A single house remains of the historic district and will be preserved. Although it no longer conveys its original association to the district, which itself has lost integrity of design, feeling, materials, workmanship, setting, and association it will be adaptively reused. While Residence 10 retains integrity of location, design, materials and craftsmanship, without the other residences and garages, it cannot by itself convey the sense of a staff community, standard plan design, and its connection to the overall development and management of the state park.

Furthermore, the district can no longer convey the standardized minimal traditional character defining features that qualified it for listing under Criterion C on the National Register of Historic Places. The set of minimal traditional style buildings reflected both the conservation of materials during and after World War II and the application of a standard design reflecting some of the popular styles of the time. This one building cannot convey the application of a standard design to a neighborhood that is no longer extant, nor the replication in form, materials and massing that made it significant. State Parks is currently preparing a state-wide National Register Multiple Property Submission for post-World War II state park architecture. We will evaluate Residence 10 as an individual resource once this effort has been completed.

Reopening the park to the public has required the Department to reconsider the fragile nature of the ancient redwood forest, under increasing pressure from climate change, and find new means to provide accessibility to millions of park visitors. Lower Sky Meadow, being one of the few areas in the park that is not redwood habitat, will be key to providing access and recreational space without increasing pressure on the fragile ecosystem. State Parks is therefore not considering reconstructing the staff housing that made the historic district. Through careful consideration and planning, California State Parks and its' partners will continue the long history of conservation which began with Big Basin Redwoods State Park and continues throughout the state of California.

Despite the loss of the district, State Parks believes this site continues to have an important story to tell. Parks is preparing two separate Points of Historical Interest nominations, one for Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area and another for the former Administration Building. These will be submitted separately from this petition. These Points of Interest nominations will

include the history of the properties, the tragic fire that destroyed them, and convey the new challenges we face in preserving park resources in a changing environment.

Please let us know if you require any further documentation to complete the removal of the Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area Historic District from the National and California Registers. For questions concerning this request, please contact Kathleen Kennedy at Kathleen.Kennedy@parks.ca.gov .

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leslie L. Hartzell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Leslie Hartzell, Ph.D.
Department Preservation Officer and Tribal Liaison
Cultural Resources Division Chief

Attachments: Figures

Cc: Chris Spohrer, District Superintendent, Santa Cruz District
Michael Grone, Senior State Archeologist, Santa Cruz District
Kathleen Kennedy, Staff Park & Recreation Specialist, CRD

Figures

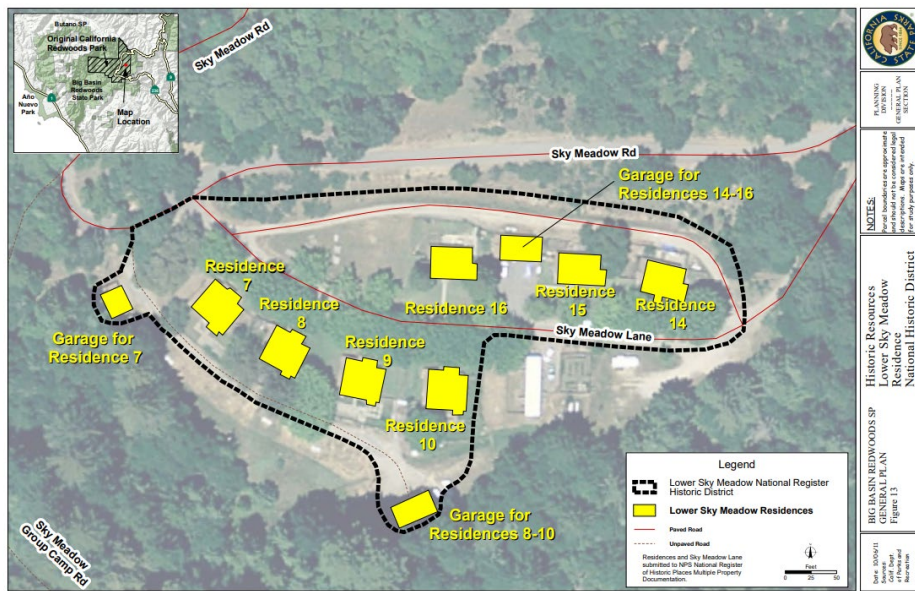


Figure 1. Map of Lower Sky Meadow Residential Area Historic District. (National Register Nomination)



Figure 2. Residence 10 after the fire, camera facing southeast September 29, 2020.



Figure 3. Residence 9 (the nearest residence to Residence 10) after the fire, camera facing southeast September 29, 2020. Nothing currently remains of these ruins.



Figure 4: Residence 16 after the fire (located directly across from Residence 10), camera facing north. September 28, 2020. Nothing currently remains of these ruins.