

Big Basin Redwoods State Park
GENERAL PLAN PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE
PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY
March 26, 2011 Public Meeting (Felton, CA)

LAND USE AND FACILITIES

Headquarters Area

- I agree with the importance of maintaining traffic control that was noted in the plan. At Big Basin's headquarters, during peak hours, traffic is really bad. Alternatives, such as remote parking and a shuttle are great ideas, especially, if the shuttle is electric or natural gas.
- The preservation of historic buildings and structures is important in maintaining the historical and educational facets of the park.
- If you have buildings providing certain uses, why move them?
- The vast majority of all park campsites (both existing and planned) are clustered around the park HQ and the historic gatehouse building (which could also serve as a campsite reservation center).
- Need to keep current equestrian staging area at park headquarters.
- Consider using composting toilets wherever possible.
- Consider installing a modern waste-water treatment system, such as The Living Machine treatment plant.
- I like the maintenance of existing buildings.
- Less development around a park is always preferable. Buildings were torn down in the past to preserve the wilder aspects of the park.
- Removal of headquarters from inside Big Basin is a good alternative.
- If parking becomes a problem, establish a parking lot in Boulder Creek and use the existing bus service (with added schedule times during peak park use).
- Love idea of restoring old buildings to the 1930s.
- Great idea to rehabilitate the old lodge.
- Are 10 cabins at Sky Meadow a good idea? More traffic and impact. We removed cabins from the HQ area 50 years ago. Would like prescribed burns in the HQ area to restore natural habitat.

Saddle Mountain

- Saddle Mountain Property could be used as a visitor center and parking lot. While mostly empty during the winter, it could be used as an educational facility, managing the property and paying rent. It would also be a great partnership since State Parks does not run four night camping trips with underserved youth.
- I am greatly concerned that the plan for Saddle Mountain does not respect the history and heritage of this area, or the extremely high value of having a youth learning center and all it brings to create citizens who respect and understand the importance of parks and the natural treasures they preserve.
- Were other parking solutions and environmental science sites considered other than Saddle Mountain?
- Staffing of the Saddle Mountain facilities must be done in a manner that avoids duplication with staff in the registration facility in the core of the park. In peak periods it will be necessary to staff both. It may be appropriate to not staff the Saddle Mountain location during most of the year as the peak periods are only during a 3-4 month period (summer months). Sempervirens Camp is such a perfect fit for the meadow at the summit of Saddle Mountain and provides unique facilities and learning opportunities that may not be possible to duplicate anywhere else in the park. I believe a plan that accommodates the camp and a main entrance is possible.
- I hope for a design that causes the least penetration into the meadow area at Saddle Mountain - a design that keeps the buildings and parking near Highway 236 would be the least intrusive, and would cause the least damage to the flora, fauna.
- Saddle Mountain is at a crest on Hwy. 236. Because of limited visibility, it represents a traffic hazard for those who are turning off of or entering the highway, and especially making a left-hand turn onto the highway, which would be every person that visits Saddle Mountain.
- Toll house and main park entrance at Saddle Mtn. are good ideas – as well as parking and shuttles from there to China Grade and Lane Camp areas.
- Brilliant idea to shuttle people around and create a visitor welcome center at Saddle Mountain – more space for staff, facilities, and visitors is good.
- State Parks should explore land acquisition proposals near Saddle Mountain or Little Basin.
- Store is a questionable use as it is 3 miles from park HQ, and you would be staffing two stores in the park. Perhaps a souvenir store with limited other items may make sense.

- Concerned about pollution and noise to immediate landowners if Saddle Mountain is turned into a parking lot and entrance area.
- The historic buildings housing the current visitor center and museum provide a much deeper glimpse into Big Basin's past than any newly constructed buildings at Saddle Mountain could.
- The process of registering for a campsite at Saddle Mountain, several miles before the actual campground would be confusing to visitors and would result in unnecessary traffic as campers back-track to register for their campsites (6 miles round trip).
- It would make more sense to open Saddle Mountain toll house park entrance during peak periods. A different schedule and route would be more appropriate during off months.
- I am concerned wildlife habitat if Saddle Mountain is turned into a parking lot: Salamanders (Pacific Giant, Arboreal, Slender) California Newts, Ensentinas, Pacific tree frogs, gopher snakes, Wilson's warblers, deer, coyote, pileated woodpeckers, sapsuckers, etc. I am also concerned that this property is the headwaters of Bloom Creek, a major tributary of East Waddell Creek.
- Removing outdoor school seems contrary to the park's goal of increasing awareness and access to the wilderness areas.
- Concerns about water, fire, septic, waste disposal, environmental impact, and CEQA.
- I don't like the proposed Saddle Mtn. equestrian staging because of limited access, unsafe (mixing buses and horses).
- I like the idea of a metro stop at Saddle Mountain.
- Operating a visitor center/parking area at Saddle Mountain goes against the State Park mission. This site services thousands of children each year, eliminating it would send the complete wrong message to the public.
- The outdoor school provides essential curricular and experiential education, and lasting partnerships with the schools and teachers in the country.
- I like the Saddle Mountain equestrian, trailhead, parking, and staging area using overnight area with restrooms and water access. Consider a few overnight corrals with space for equestrian's portable corrals.
- Need to define "adequate vegetative screening and buffers" between park facilities and adjacent land uses.
- There is a large influx of visitors to the park in the summer when the outdoor school at Saddle Mountain is not in session. It seems the goals of the park and outdoor school are mutual and should be able to coexist.

Little Basin

- A redesign of this intersection may be appropriate to access Little Basin Road, including left hand turns across Hwy. 236.
- Little Basin is an excellent location for large groups, clubs, corporate retreats, and RV hook-ups for camping if some improvements were made to Little Basin Road. Lease agreement should include coordinating access in and out of Little Basin.
- This is an excellent location for the park to facilitate large groups, clubs, and corporate retreats. It also could be a location for RV hook ups for camping if some improvements were made to Little Basin Road.
- Your plan for opening Little Basin Road to heavy two-way traffic is unrealistic to anyone who has driven down this road. Two normal-sized cars cannot pass on this road in many places; consider the trouble an RV would have navigating the sharp corners and steep drop-offs. The road is highly prone to erosion. A different route must be found.
- Park is isolated, and overnight facilities are necessary for an effective park. Little Basin is ideal as a group camp with RV hook-ups, electricity and water, are provided; and with amenities, such as a sports area, lake, cooking and meeting facilities, and dining areas. It could handle large groups without negative impacts.
- The historical use of property shows that mountain biking is an ongoing recreational option. How about an annual bicycling event/fundraiser, with a start/finish at Little Basin?
- Don't remove the dam, reservoir or ball field.
- Remove the dam at Little Basin.
- Operate a green campground as an educational facility for large groups.
- Have different events every months, including Native (American) events – how tribes lived; and classes.
- Great ideas to involve Native Americans in events (powwows) and/or educational opportunities.
- Consider Little Basin dam as an emergency water source (e.g., fire fighting).
- Keep the reservoir/fishing pond. It is woven into the environment – even the leak provides water for plants.
- Establish a 200-site campground and two picnic areas in Little Basin. Designate one picnic area to families, and the other to large groups.

- Little Basin Tan Bark Road/Trail has a spur road that could be developed to hike-in camping – trail camps are the heaviest used camps in the mountains.
- Improvements and protection of Little Basin Road is important.
- HP had to truck in water to Little Basin. What will happen now?
- Need an environmental impact study of Little Basin, impact to roads for additional usage, 236 and traffic impacts, to adjacent homeowners, and watershed.
- With expansion of “transient clientele,” I am concerned about security of Little Basin.
- Make all trails at Little Basin for pedestrians and equestrians.
- Need additional trails connecting to Big Basin from Little Basin. Would be wonderful to have a loop down Scott Creek and East Waddell Creek.
- Would prefer Little Basin remain tent cabins with minimal development on lodging.
- Consider developing an educational center or program that allows children to learn without interfering/impacting with the environment.

Rancho del Oso

- Important to protect creeks and adjoining watersheds at Rancho del Oso (e.g., TJ Hoover Wetlands). Further study for effects on endangered species and sedimentation of creek is needed.
- Need access for horses on the Clark’s Connection that connects the West Ridge Trail to main road out of Rancho del Oso.
- Review access rights through private road to upper Waddell for patrol and other uses.
- I like the idea of moving the entrance gate at RDO.
- Unclear if bike camp at RDO will be with horse camp.
- I like the camping idea at Waddell.
- Camping locations on the coast are solely needed.
- I like the entrance improvements for RDO, the modernization of the ranger station, bike camping, and enlarging the parking facilities.
- Relocate RDO parking and provide turnaround that will accommodate room for horse trailer. Need a parking area to accommodate 4 horse trailers.

- I like the plan to improve the bridge at Waddell and make a pedestrian underpass. This will improve safety for drivers, as well.
- Reconstruct the road just south of Waddell Forks – there is no fire road access beyond this point.

EQUESTRIAN ACCESS & FACILITIES

Horse Camps

- At RDO Horse Camp, improve horse trailer access by creating a circle drive or drive through parking spaces. Please do not integrate proposed bicycle camp with existing horse camp.
- We support a proposed "ride-in horse camp" at Sandy Point, although this did not show up in the Preferred Alternative. A camp at this location allows equestrians to park at RDO and proceed into the park for longer distances with designated overnight areas along the way.
- I support the plan for upgrades to horse camping at Rancho del Oso.
- Bike camp should be north, not adjacent, to horse camp.
- Make horse camp user friendly and accessible.

Equestrian Trails

- My experience (on Town and County Trail Committees) is that we spend most of our trail maintenance money on equestrian trails.
- Retain the current staging area in the HQ area at the base of Gazos Creek Road, which provides an important trailhead to several equestrian trails. Designate multiple staging areas of 2-4 trailer parking spaces at Basin Trail Easement Connection and at the South side of China Grade near the northern intersection of 236.
- Develop additional loop trails, where feasible, for hikers and equestrians. Add loop trails of lengths less than 10 miles by allowing horses on existing trails, (Meteor, Hollow Tree, and North Escape Road).
- Using existing trails for shorter loops is more cost effective than creating new trails connections. Trail loops allow for a more interesting park experience. Having shorter loops allows for shorter rides, which opens up the park to more equestrians.

- Having four vehicle w/trailer spaces for equestrians near HQ does not compromise the goal of reduction in traffic in the HQ area. We propose converting a small day use picnic area located between the bridge and the gate to Gazos Creek Road on the left side for vehicle trailer parking and equestrian staging area. By having all staging areas completely remote, in addition to many separate foot trails, it is very likely that horses will rarely be visible to park visitors.
- Any combination of horse and bikes along this McCrary Ridge Trail or converting it into a multi-use trail would be extremely unsafe and undesirable.
- We propose a trailer parking and staging area at the Basin Trail Easement connection to Lane Sunset trail camp. We would like space for four trailers in that area. This section of the park is too remote from all the other staging areas.
- We propose four trailer parking spaces and staging area on the south side of China Grade near the northern intersection of Hwy. 236. To allow connection to the East Ridge Trail from this staging area, we would like an authorized equestrian or multi-use trail so horses don't have to travel on China Grade road to enter the northern end of East Ridge Trail.
- The East Ridge Trail is not useable for most equestrians due to the steep grade (particularly heading north) and poor trail conditions heading south and east, where it is the only route to network with other equestrian trails. Bloom Creek Bridge is not useable by equestrians in its current condition, and would have to be replaced to make the East Ridge Staging Area at all viable. If the bridge were rebuilt, you could designate Opal as an equestrian trail. Though this location is not optimal for central access to the park, it has potential for a functional staging area, if the issues listed are addressed.
- Putting horse trailer parking/staging in areas of congestion (vehicles, bicycles, or pedestrians) is unwise and unsafe. Having lingering persons/children waiting for shuttles around horse staging areas is a recipe for disaster as kids can wander off and get behind or close to an unsuspecting horse. The general populations, including bicyclists, are not aware of how to approach a horse.
- We support and encourage relocating the entrance gate to RDO further inland as a major safety issue.
- Connect Fall Creek at Empire Grade and Alba Road to Big Basin.
- Need safe equestrian staging and trails.
- Use current day-use picnic area for limited (4 trailers) equestrian staging. This allows access on many trails and for all levels of difficulty.
- Allow upgrade to horse use of Howard King Trail from the top of McCrary Ridge down to Waddell Creek, so riders can loop. The Mesa Trail is much easier and shorter.

MOUNTAIN BIKE ACCESS & USE

- It is expensive to employ additional Rangers to patrol for bicycle violations - and cyclists do need monitoring.
- I support all parts of the plan which will increase access for mountain biking within the park.
- Please make this park accessible to all users, and increase access and use for mountain biking.
- Bicycle trail connections from Waddell Beach to the Bay Area Ridge Trail are important. "bikepacking" is becoming a popular activity, and Big Basin's large size and connection with other trail networks make it an ideal place to enjoy this activity. Investigate the potential for new multi-use trails outside of the state wilderness or opening more existing trails to multi-use (e.g., loop from Big Basin HQ through Gazos Creek Road, Chalks Road, Whitehouse Canyon, Cloverdale Road, South Butano Fire Trail, and Middle Ridge, returning to HQ).
- I fully support all efforts that will increase access, trails, and opportunities for both road and mountain biking. A mountain-to-the-sea trail would be fantastic.
- This is a plea to NOT consider any expansion of trail size, or multi-use in our gorgeous State Park areas. Please do not consider widening single-track trails at all! Trail widening would defeat the basic purpose . . . to protect and enjoy! Please ban mountain biking in ALL parks, and wilderness.
- I am excited about the proposal to maintain a bicycle corridor on the roadbed along West Waddell Creek from south. I also appreciate the effort to serve bicyclists touring along Highway 1 and the effort to provide additional camping.
- Plan should clearly state "No bikes on McCrary Ridge Trail."

TRAFFIC AND CIRCULATION

Shuttle

- Concerns about the initial development and ongoing support costs of a shuttle system. Also, I can certainly support the idea of expanded parking facilities at satellite locations but I cannot support a proposal to purchase and staff parking shuttles in a hiking park.
- The Gate House might be a better location for shuttle, parking, and key main entrance.
- Use of shuttles with parking at China Grade, the main park, and some at Saddle Mountain, would be a green solution with less traffic pollution.

- Work with Santa Cruz Metro transit to provide expanded bus service to Big Basin.
- I like the idea of a shuttle system to allow for more [accessible] ways to experience the forest.
- Perhaps a shuttle from Boulder Creek (Rt. 9) can be used to get more people into the park.
- For area safety, Highway 236 should be open through the park.
- Explore the use of Light Rail connection between Little Basin, Saddle Mountain, and Big Basin Redwoods SP.
- Buses should be natural gas powered.

Trailhead Parking and Access

- Traffic impact and safety issues is an area needing in-depth analysis as trying to redirect traffic from the north entrance of Hwy 236 presents several potential challenges and impacts.
- A new road is needed from Park HQ to Little Basin or Gate House at Little Basin Rd. to minimize traffic.
- Consider working with map and GPS software vendors to avoid confusion and find best way to enter the park.
- Increased traffic through the populated areas of Boulder Creek may require a signal at Hwy 9 and 236 in down town Boulder Creek. Impact of increased traffic from Skyline into Boulder Creek may also require some road modifications.
- Must have multiple main entrances because of multiple entrances to the park from both Highway 236 entrances and possible Little Basin entrance.
- To guide persons coming off of Skyline to take 9 to Boulder Creek and then to Saddle Mountain adds 7.5 miles to their trip (or 15-20 minutes, depending on traffic). You are taking them through the most populated areas of Boulder Creek and creating additional traffic which could be severe during commute hours of local residents.
- Use the parking that already exists at park HQ and along North Escape Road.
- I recommend using the existing parking lots, and make it possible for people to register for camping at the campsites so they don't have to park in front of the lodge and then do a U-turn to go back to their campsite. You also open registration at the camp store or another building further down North Escape Road, so you don't have to walk to the check-in area, and back to their car.

- Fix China Grade Rd. so people will drive to Johansen Rd. trailhead. Make Sandy Point a destination. Improve West Ridge Trail so it is not such a difficult hike to Chalk Mountain. Put a campground at Sandy Point and/or Chalk Mountain. Put outhouse and water at Sandy Point.
- Be proactive in including Camp Hammer in the process of sharing trails, and for more campers and guests.
- The bridge which crosses Bloom Creek is not safe for horses.
- Utilize old Big Basin stables as staging and access to East Ridge Trail system.
- Open an old skid road from Dingall Saddle on McCrary Ridge Trail down to Mesa Creek to join Canyon Road upstream from the forks.
- Trails open to bicycles is important so I don't have to drive everywhere. Trails on backside of Saddle Mountain are not appropriate.

STATE WILDERNESS

- I am most disturbed with the plans to expand and extend trails into wilderness areas where human impacts will severely disturb habitat and will be extraordinarily difficult, to say the least, to monitor and control; and to allow horses and bicycles deep inside will be incredibly difficult. I strongly feel that human use should be curtailed rather than expanded.
- Preservation of natural resources (expanded wilderness areas) is important.
- I encourage the expansion of state wilderness property to include Gazos Creek Rd. and west to Whitehouse Canyon Rd.
- I am strongly against the addition of auto tours because this would negatively impact the preservation of the wilderness properties and visitor experience, increasing noise and other pollution, and encourage use of fossil fuels, and seems an expensive endeavor.
- I like the additional trailhead parking, and additional loop trails for Wilderness and Backcountry areas. Make McCrary Ridge Trail multi-use. Increase number of visitors to backcountry area: Johansen, Whitehouse Ridge, Chalk Mountain, and West Ridge.
- There are few visitors to this part of the park. Improve access to trailheads.
- Keep it wild with small backpacking campgrounds at least 9 months of use (instead of 8 months closure that we have now).
- Like the idea of expanding the state wilderness and backcountry zone to include 390 acres of additional lands north of Gazos Creek Rd. and west to Whitehorse Canyon Rd.

- Concerned about impact of horses and mountain bikes.
- I have safety concerns about horses and bicycles along McCrary Ridge Trail. Also, erosion issues from horses and bicycles on these trails.
- Strongly oppose allowing mountain bikes on McCrary Ridge, Clark Connector, Mesa Creek, and Howard King.
- Need more Porta-potties in backcountry and Sandy Point Lookout.
- How will the designation “wilderness” impact ongoing silviculture practices on adjacent private property where this has been continuous use since 1948.
- Provide alternative interpretive materials and signage for backcountry to inspire people to get out there.
- The plan’s goal to provide additional opportunities within Big Basin for people with disabilities and/or limited mobility is commendable. However, the detrimental effects of opening backcountry areas to shuttles and tours should be carefully weighed against the benefits of providing expanded access. Allowing auto tours and shuttles into the backcountry would greatly compromise the value of Big Basin’s wilderness as a place of solitude and deep connection to the natural world.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

Old Growth Redwoods

- I appreciate the plans focus on preserving the old growth forest as well as the preservation of historical and cultural landscape elements.
- It is important to preserve and protect the natural resources, wildlife, and backcountry of the area, as well as educational resources.
- All efforts to protect natural resources and cultural sites, and to improve park education about these sites is important.
- Need adequate controls (e.g., rangers) to protect natural resources.
- The preservation of old growth is essential.

Resource Protection and Interpretation

- This is an area that has been saved & respected by all current and previous owners – it should stay that way!
- Preservation of the history, including the native inhabitants, settlers and residents of this area is important.

- There should be an emphasis on protection of natural resources.
- Protection of wilderness, wildlife, watersheds, and prevention of erosion, are barely addressed.
- Least liked the expansion of access by bicycles or horses, unless carefully limited, and restriction from trails strictly enforced.
- Did not see guidelines for day or overnight use to limit human impact.
- Important to limit human impacts on wildlife & natural resources; to reduce crow and raven populations; and expand enforcement of protective regulations.
- Would like more attention to history of the area before it became a park, such as kiosks at lumber camps, mill sites, and at Sandy Point about the guard station that was there.
- Some trails are nicely graded, but others are not. West Ridge and East Ridge are avoided because of very steep sections.
- Important for adequate interpretation of buildings.
- Need mapping of large predators (mountain lions, coyotes).
- I like the idea of closing Waddell Beach and regulating attendance during snowy plover nesting season. What about an animal greenway with a fence, as well as a pedestrian bridge. Countless deer and coyote fall victim to Highway 1 traffic.
- Understanding the cultural history is integral to developing visitors' appreciation for an intimate connection to our State Parks.
- Preservation of Big Basin for low-impact recreation is important.