

PRESS RELEASE

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California State Parks, Save the Redwoods League and Waddell Creek Association Open New Rancho del Oso Welcome Center at Big Basin Redwoods State Park

SANTA CRUZ, Calif.— [California State Parks](#), [Save the Redwoods League](#), and [Waddell Creek Association](#) today announced the opening of the new Rancho del Oso Welcome Center, a gateway to the western coastal side of Big Basin Redwoods State Park. The new welcome center facility and adjacent public campground will greet visitors to California's oldest state park and largest expanse of old-growth coast redwoods south of San Francisco. The park has had limited access since the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fires.

"We're excited to celebrate the opening of the Rancho del Oso Welcome Center and see visitors return to this special part of Big Basin Redwoods State Park," said **Jessica Carter**, director of parks and public engagement for Save the Redwoods League. "The new building, large deck and engaging interpretive exhibits provide for expanded community programs and an inspiring experience for all who visit."

Available trails and amenities at Rancho del Oso

The new 684-square-foot Rancho del Oso Welcome Center, with its 480-square-foot observation deck, supports outdoor group programs and general recreational opportunities for the park. The site will also serve as a gateway to the Skyline-To-The-Sea Trail once the trail is reopened. The center features interactive and virtual interpretive exhibits, hand-painted murals of the local coastal ecosystem and ocean views.

From the center, visitors can explore nearby trails, access Waddell State Beach, visit the Rancho del Oso Nature and History Center and stay overnight in one of six renovated

campsites. Trail access further into Big Basin from Rancho del Oso remains closed due to extensive damage from the CZU fire. Public trail access from the welcome center into Big Basin along the Skyline-To-The-Sea Trail and to Berry Creek Falls is expected to take several years to restore due to extensive trail system and infrastructure damage incurred by the CZU fire.

At Rancho del Oso, open trails include the Marsh Trail, which is open to visitors from May through October with a seasonal creek crossing, and the Hoover Trail on the south side of Waddell Creek, which is now restored and open for hiking year-round.

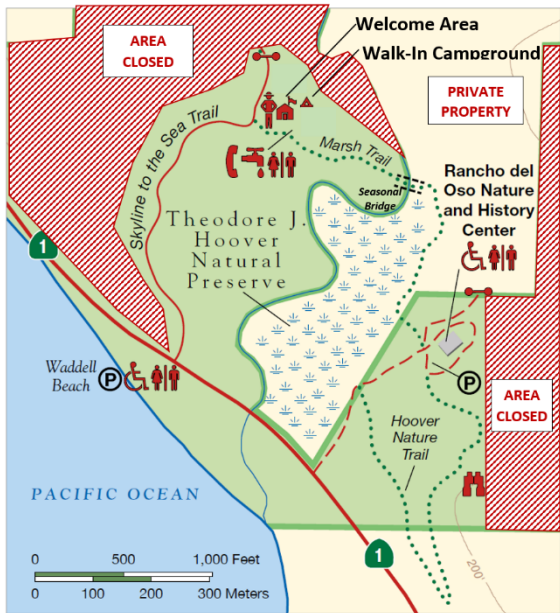
From the Waddell Beach parking lot, located along Highway 1 approximately 18 miles north of Santa Cruz, the welcome center is reached by a quarter-mile hike up Skyline-To-The-Sea Trail Road or by vehicle for visitors with a camping reservation. It will generally be open from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. No fees or reservations are required for day use at Rancho del Oso; guests can learn more about camping and how to reserve a campsite on the California State Parks [website](#).

California State Parks opened the [public campground](#) at the Rancho del Oso Horse Camp next to the new welcome center in July 2023. The campground is temporarily accommodating visitors that walk or bike in until equestrian trails are restored. There are currently five campsites that can be reserved and one non-reserved bike-in site. Save the Redwoods League and [Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks](#) partnered to help improve the campsites and make them inviting once again for overnight visitors.

“We are thankful for support from partners like Save the Redwoods League and Waddell Creek Association who have helped renovate the welcome center to greet all future park visitors on the coastal side of Big Basin” said **Chris Spohrer**, district superintendent for California State Parks. “The extensive renovations provide visitors new opportunities to learn about the changing environment and park which is key to successful future stewardship.”

Visitor access to Big Basin Headquarters remains open but limited since the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire burned more than 97% of the park and destroyed nearly all the park’s buildings, trail networks, roads, bridges, and campgrounds. Though the former ranger station at Rancho del Oso did not burn in the wildfire, it was at the end of its life expectancy. Prior to the CZU fire, Save the Redwoods League, California State Parks and Waddell Creek Association had a partnership project planned to revitalize the site and open the new welcome center in place of the ranger station.

Public access to Big Basin is now open at Waddell State Beach, Rancho del Oso and day-use trails near the park’s headquarters along Highway 236 near Boulder Creek, California. For more information about parking reservations and visitation, visit the park’s [webpage](#).



Top: California State Parks, Save the Redwoods League, and Waddell Creek Association invite the public to the new Rancho del Oso Welcome Center. Photo by Save the Redwoods League. Bottom left: The Rancho del Oso area at Big Basin Redwoods State Park. Bottom right: The Rancho del Oso Welcome Center features interactive and virtual interpretive exhibits, murals of the local coastal ecosystem and ocean views. Photo by Save the Redwoods League.

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The California Department of Parks and Recreation, popularly known as State Parks, and the programs supported by its Office of Historic Preservation and divisions of Boating and Waterways and Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation provides for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. Learn more at parks.ca.gov.

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Save the Redwoods League

One of the nation's longest-running conservation organizations, Save the Redwoods League has been protecting and restoring redwood forests since 1918. The League has connected generations of visitors with the beauty and serenity of the redwood forests. Our 400,000 supporters have enabled the League to protect more than 220,000 acres of irreplaceable forests in 66 state, national, and local parks and reserves. For information, please visit SaveTheRedwoods.org.

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Waddell Creek Association

The Waddell Creek Association mission is to preserve, enhance, and interpret the beauty, diversity and cultural resources at Rancho del Oso. The Association is dedicated to inspiring awareness, understanding, and stewardship of the natural world through educational programs for school groups and the general public. The Waddell Creek Association is a California State Parks (CSP) 501(c)3 cooperating association supporting the educational and recreational programs at Rancho del Oso. Learn more at RanchodelOso.org.

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