Save-the-Redwoods League

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Save-the-Redwoods League Employs New Technology in Search for World's Tallest Tree

Organization awards grant for the use of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) throughout 138,000 acres in Humboldt County to promote forest restoration and conservation

SAN FRANCISCO— Save-the-Redwoods League is currently funding the use of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR), a remote sensing technology to search for trees that may surpass the height of Hyperion, the world's tallest tree. LiDAR will also serve as an aid in forest restoration. Hyperion, at 115 meters, or 379 feet, may not be the world's tallest organism, as scientists predict some coastal redwoods could reach 400 feet tall or beyond.

LiDAR surpasses other surveying systems, as traditional fly-over techniques for estimating the height of a tree's canopy to the forest floor have an error range of 30 meters – nearly 100 feet. LiDAR will reduce this error range to ½ a meter, guaranteeing more accurate measurements.

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Low-flying airplanes fitted with LiDAR equipment have covered 138,000 acres of redwood forests in Humboldt County, including the recovering 25,000 acre Mill Creek Property in Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park. Humboldt County was specifically chosen for mapping due to active restoration programs already in place. The area also has a high percentage of second growth forests that require more management such as fire control and species protection. LiDAR data will be used to support these restoration efforts, and to protect endangered salmon species on the recovering Mill Creek Property. The League helped protect this critical watershed in 2002 and has since been a key partner in the forests' restoration. Clear-cutting and planting of dense tree farms has caused the Mill Creek Property's redwood forests to become extremely dense and uniform, weakening the forest and inhibiting proper growth. This data will prove invaluable in prioritizing which of these slow-growing, unnatural forests are most in need of immediate forest restoration treatments. Restoration work is time sensitive and success hinges on having accurate data.

The detailed map of the forest floor that LiDAR provides will also be essential in protecting salmon habitat. The data will be used to locate dangerous sediment buildups from logging roads that threaten the coho Salmon. Locating and removing these sediments is essential to the revitalization and clarification of these streams.

Save-the-Redwoods League has protected the ancient redwood forests for nearly ninety years and expects LiDAR data will prove to be vital in statewide efforts for the preservation and restoration of the world's remaining redwoods. "Save-the-Redwoods League supports original research to advance our understanding of the redwoods," said Dan Porter, the League's Director of Science and Planning.

"The LiDAR images will inspire new questions and hopefully create a new dialogue regarding the protection of this national treasure," says Porter. Philanthropist and big tree enthusiast Ken Fisher of Fisher Investments, who made a generous contribution to the project, agrees, saying, "The use of LiDAR in the redwoods could be transformational."

The LiDAR data was collected by mapping company Sanborn. The company's flights fitted with LiDAR originated from Crescent City in Northern California and conducted the measurements over the summer of 2007, conducting several flights as weather permitted in the fog-heavy area.

The flights and the data interpretation were funded privately by Save-the-Redwoods League and Mr. Fisher, but local state organizations such as the Department of Parks & Recreation, the Department of Fish and Game and the National Park Service have all contributed to this LIDAR Project. All data gathered will be shared among these organizations and will be public domain, available to any and all interested parties.

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About Save-the-Redwoods League

Save-the-Redwoods League is dedicated to protecting ancient redwood forests so that all generations can experience the majesty of these towering giants. In 1850, there were nearly two million acres of ancient coast redwood forests in California. Today, less than five percent remain. Since its founding in 1918, the League has protected more than 170,000 acres of land and played a vital role in the establishment of 39 redwood parks and reserves. More than six out of ten acres of redwoods in California's State Parks have been protected by Save-the-Redwoods League. For more information, visit www.savetheredwoods.org or call 415-362-2352.

About LiDAR

LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a new measuring technology utilizing a laser beam fired in short bursts and recording the reflection. In Humboldt, this was done from an overhead airplane to the ground below, which effectively measures the distance from the airplane to the ground. Most useful for Forestry work, LiDAR also successfully defines intermediate surfaces such as power lines and canopies. LiDAR emerged only a few years ago and has been utilized to discover fault lines, measure glacial movements and determine biomass in Oceanography and Forestry. It also has several military and industrial applications.

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About Sanborn

With a rich tradition of mapping dating back to 1866, Sanborn offers end-to-end geospatial solutions backed by the latest in technology and superior customer support. The company's combined product and service offerings include consulting and off-the-shelf products; analog, digital and LiDAR data acquisition; photogrammetric mapping, remote sensing solutions, and data conversion. Sanborn offers product solutions for government and commercial customers. A nationally recognized company, Sanborn has multiple offices in the United States. For more information, visit www.sanborn.com.

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