



November 14, 2018

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For Immediate Release

***PARTNERSHIP UNVEILS PLAN TO SAFEGUARD
THE GROVE OF TITANS IN REDWOOD NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS***

California State Parks, Save the Redwoods League, National Park Service and Redwood Parks Conservancy Team Up to Protect and Create New Access for Renowned, Remote Grove

***Partners must raise \$500,000 for the 1st phase of \$3.5 million project by December 31, 2018
A matching challenge grant underway to reach the goal***

San Francisco, Calif. (November 14, 2018) – [California State Parks](#), [Save the Redwoods League](#), [National Park Service](#) and [Redwood Parks Conservancy](#) today unveiled a plan to safeguard the Grove of Titans and adjacent forest in the [Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park unit of Redwood National and State Parks](#) in Del Norte County, California. The Grove of Titans is a magnificent stand of ancient redwoods that contains some of the world’s largest trees. Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park is the wettest place in California and home to the forest with the world-record breaking amount of carbon storage above ground (2,600 Mg carbon per hectare)—a vital component in combating climate change. The location of the grove, which has no official trail access, has become a popular tourist attraction in recent years, leading to increasing off-trail visitation, which has wreaked considerable damage to the grove and its environs.

The Plan

By joining forces, the partners will protect this sensitive habitat while creating a memorable experience for visitors. The project, which is projected to be completed by July 2021, will establish official, safe access to the grove, ecosystem protections for the trees and all necessary visitor services and amenities. Specifically, it includes:

- Conducting a visitor usage study that will inform enhancement of the visitor experience
- Installing a 1,300-foot elevated walkway that connects to the existing Mill Creek Trail
- Removing unofficial social trails and restoring impacted areas in and around the grove
- Installing services and amenities, including ADA accessible parking and restrooms

- Developing interpretive programming and materials that provide information about the grove's history and redwood ecosystem, while encouraging visitors to stay on designated trails

The cost of the project is estimated at \$3.5 million. A generous dollar-for-dollar challenge grant from **Josie Merck**, a passionate and caring friend of Save the Redwoods League, to match all contributions made by December 31, 2018 up to \$500,000 is in place to support the campaign's first phase. Ms. Merck, an artist who studied painting at Sarah Lawrence College and received her MFA from Yale University School of Art, read about the plight of the Grove of Titans in the San Francisco Chronicle last year and was inspired to offer this challenge to get the project up and running. Ms. Merck's father, George W. Merck, was a Councilor of Save the Redwoods League from 1953 until his death in 1984. Legendary forester Carl Alwin Schenck was a family relative and a further inspiration for Ms. Merck's gift. Contributions towards the challenge can be made directly to the Save the Redwoods League at [SaveTheRedwoods.org/Titans](https://www.savetheredwoods.org/Titans).

Project Timeline

Phase 1 of the project – planning, assessment and compliance – is currently underway and scheduled to be completed by fall 2019. The partners will undertake an adaptive public access study of Howland Hill Road, the main automobile access to the grove. The planned rerouting of the Mill Creek Trail and construction of a raised pedestrian trail system will undergo compliance review by district resource staff. (Images of plans below)

Phase 2 includes remediation, construction and improvements and is anticipated to begin in September 2019. This phase will include construction of the elevated walkway, removal of social trails and restoration, installation of visitor services and amenities, and development and installation of interpretive signage and materials. During the construction phase, the Mill Creek Trail will be closed from Howland Hill Road to the Smith River. The new trail system is projected to open in July 2021.

“The situation at the Grove of Titans demonstrates the delicate balance that sometimes must be struck between public access and protection,” said **Paul Ringgold**, chief program officer for Save the Redwoods League. “Visitation to our public redwood parks is a benefit for all and is essential to the long-term conservation of redwood ecosystems: People need to experience the beauty and power of these magnificent trees to understand the necessity of conserving them. But when unregulated visitation threatens specific groves, we must identify ways to eliminate the impacts without eliminating visitor enjoyment. The plans we've developed for the Grove of Titans do just that.”

Joanna Di Tommaso, development director for Redwood Parks Conservancy, emphasized the necessity of broad-based coalitions for implementing ambitious initiatives such as the Grove of Titans management plan. “We're each bringing our particular strengths to this effort,” said Di Tommaso, “and we're all in agreement that action is needed now. People have asked me if this project is really necessary, because the damage may not be glaringly apparent to a casual hiker. My answer is, yes, there *is* very real damage, and it will only increase over time, so action

absolutely is necessary. We have to remember that only five percent of the ancient redwoods remain. Any threat to any of them must be addressed.”

Background

The Grove of Titans was identified deep in the old-growth forests of Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park in 1998. Following unofficial publication of its location, in print and online, visitation increased dramatically over the past 20 years, with peak travel of 13,000 cars per month along Howland Hill Road during the busy summer months, often resulting in gridlock.

With spiraling visitation, the negative impacts anticipated by California State Parks materialized. Over the years, a complex web of “social” trails has formed, and the resulting influx of foot traffic has destroyed understory plants and compacted soil, inhibiting the uptake of water and nutrients by the shallow roots of the redwoods and threatening the long-term survival of the grove itself. Additionally, unplanned trails can cause soil erosion and corresponding run off that can affect coho and steelhead spawning habitat.

“Instead of looking like a prehistoric and pristine forest it's starting to look like the LA freeway system,” said **Brett Silver**, acting sector superintendent for California State Parks. “Once construction begins access to the grove will be closed. I know it will be frustrating for people not to have access. We ask all the visitors for their patience and cooperation as we work to preserve and protect this incredible place for future generations to enjoy.”

For further information and to donate, visit [SaveTheRedwoods.org/Titans](https://www.savetheredwoods.org/Titans) or [GroveofTitans.org](https://www.groveoftitans.org). You may also make donations by calling Save the Redwoods League at **(415) 820-5800** or Redwood Parks Conservancy at **(707) 465-7329**.

Project updates available at [SaveTheRedwoods.org/project/grove-of-titans](https://www.savetheredwoods.org/project/grove-of-titans).

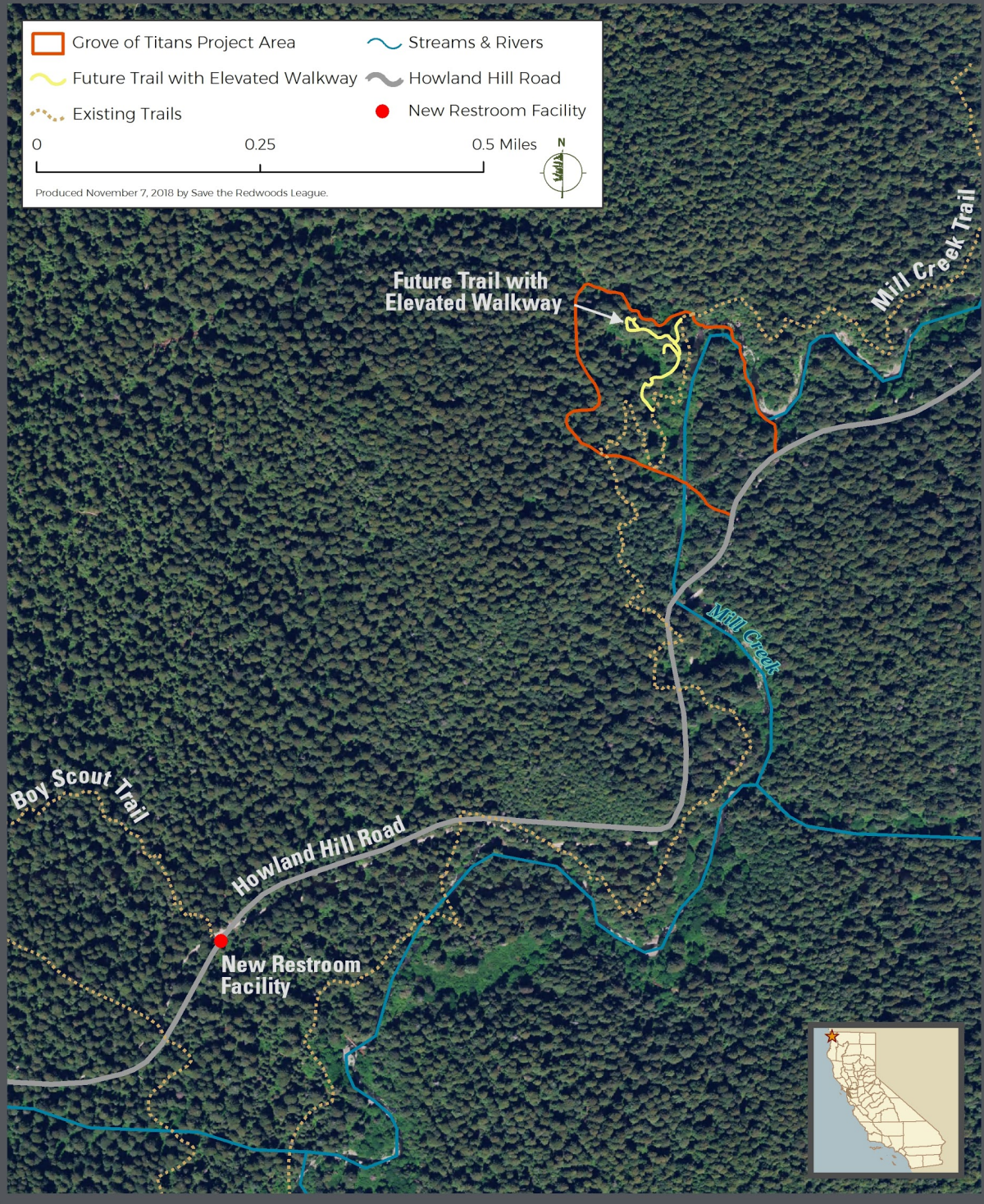
To access images, videos, or maps please [visit our newsroom for resources](#). To schedule an interview, please contact **Ashley Boarman, Landis Communications** at **(415) 359-2312** or redwoods@landispr.com.

- See images next page -

GROVE OF TITANS

Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, Del Norte County

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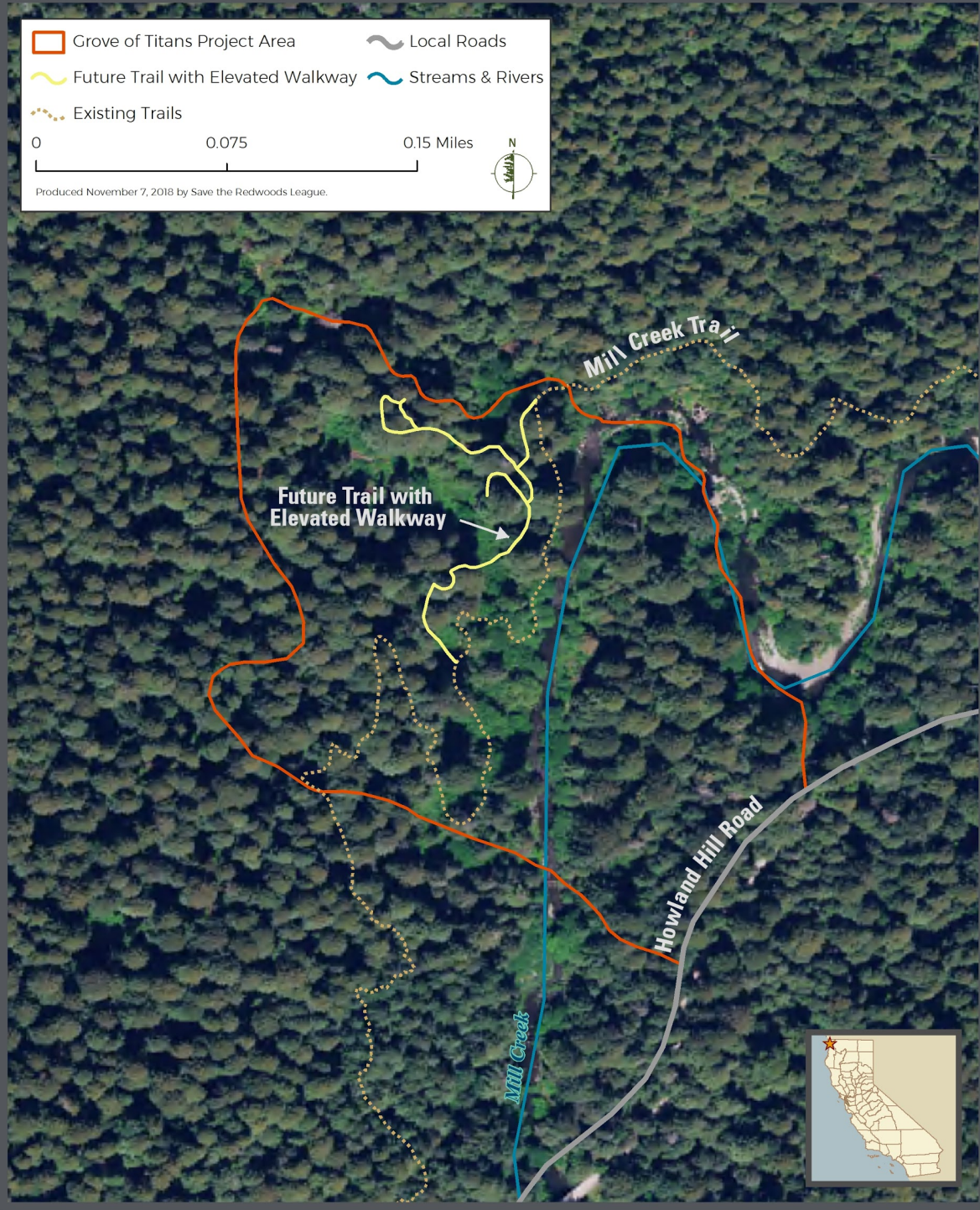


Aerial view of the Grove of Titans, with future elevated trail and new restroom facility.

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Zoom view: Aerial view of the Grove of Titans, with future elevated trail.

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