



## Press Release

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### **Save the Redwoods League and California State Parks Bring the Giant Sequoia Forests of California into Classrooms Worldwide**

***Innovative, Live Distance Learning Transports Students Around the World to Calaveras Big Trees State Park starting October 8, 2018***

**September 13, 2018 (San Francisco)** – Save the Redwoods League and California State Parks have launched a new digital field trip that explores the challenges, including wildfires, facing our giant sequoia forests. Giant sequoia, the largest living trees on Earth, are found only in California’s Sierra Nevada. Their massive size, singular beauty, and rarity have made them living icons of the natural world and subjects of global fascination. The new giant sequoia program will air live through the Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students program (PORTS).



The PORTS program connects students to their state parks through videos and interviews with a park ranger.

PORTS is an interactive and comprehensive digital education package that has taught over half a million kids in California and 20 countries around the world about the ecosystems, wildlife, and the history of California’s state parks. The new giant sequoia unit was designed for K-12 classrooms, and it will be available through the 2018-19 school year.

“Bringing the beauty and magic of our state parks through the PORTS program allows students to be transported to a different part of their world, one they may not have even known existed,” said Director Lisa Mangat, California State Parks. “Partnering with the League to bring this digital access to more children will help expand their knowledge and interest not only in giant sequoia, but also to the diverse natural and cultural treasures found in California’s state parks.”



Interpretive specialist Jenny Comperda helps broaden learning through digital redwood science programs at Calaveras Big Trees State Park.

Through PORTS, teachers connect to media platforms provided by Microsoft Education Skype in the Classroom, Nearpod and Smithsonian Digital Learning Lab. For 15 years, students have interacted with State Park interpreters and League scientists in real time, viewing the parks related to the curriculum, fielding questions and responding to queries. PORTS meets Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards, and it has proven invaluable in both teaching course material and preparing students for field trips to California State Parks. Currently, there are 14 units of study offered by PORTS: redwood ecology,

Hearst Castle, kelp forests, elephant seals, the Gold Rush, monarch butterfly life cycles and migration, redwood ecology, salmon life cycles, the science of habitat protection and restoration, state government, tide pools, weather and climate and mammal characteristics.

“PORTS is considered the gold standard for K-12 distance learning opportunities,” said Paul Ringgold, chief program officer of Save the Redwoods League. “The PORTS redwood ecology program has been extremely successful at generating student enthusiasm about coast redwoods. We expect a similar result from the giant sequoia study unit. Coast redwoods and giant sequoia have been with us for thousands of years and protecting them is a long-term commitment. We believe PORTS is an essential tool for developing conservation literacy among our future environmental stewards.”

Giant sequoia are the largest living trees on Earth and exist in only 73 groves scattered along the western slope of California’s Sierra Nevada – the last remnants of a vast *Sequoiadendron giganteum* forest that, along with coast redwood ancestors, covered much of the northern hemisphere. Though most of these ancient and magnificent trees have been protected in parks and reserves, they remain vulnerable to development, visitation impacts, air pollution, catastrophic wildfire and climate change.

The giant sequoia study unit will focus on the two spectacular giant sequoia groves encompassed by Calaveras Big Trees State Park near the town of Arnold, California. League scientists will be on-site for the live video interactive sessions from October 8-11, during the League’s Centennial Celebration Week. The Giant Sequoia PORTS will be available until June 2019.

“Calaveras Big Trees is one of our flagship parks, a property that’s emblematic of giant sequoia ecosystems and representative of all the challenges that giant sequoia face,” said Brad Krey, the interpretation and education program manager for State Parks. “The new PORTS study unit will prepare students in classrooms who plan a field trip to the park – or, for those students around the state, nation and world who don’t have the opportunity to visit the park. It literally brings the forest into their classrooms.”

*Editors please note, to sign up for the **FREE** giant sequoia digital field trip today go to [www.ports.parks.ca.gov/register](http://www.ports.parks.ca.gov/register).*

**About Save the Redwoods League**

Save the Redwoods League, one of the nation's oldest conservation organizations, is connecting generations of visitors with their peace and beauty. With more than 20,000 supporters, the League has protected more than 200,000 acres of irreplaceable forest and helped create 66 redwood parks and reserves. For more information, visit [SaveTheRedwoods.org](http://SaveTheRedwoods.org).

**About California State Parks**

The [California Department of Parks and Recreation](#) protects and preserves the state's valued natural, cultural, and historical resources while providing recreational opportunities, including hiking, camping, mountain biking, horseback riding, boating and off-highway vehicle activities. The department achieves its mission through grant programs and a network of 280 parks, which includes beaches, trails, wildlife areas, open spaces, off-highway areas, and historic sites.

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