



Calaveras Big Trees Association - Board Resolution

In a duly noticed Calaveras Big Trees Association Board of Directors meeting held January 26, 2022, the Board considered and adopted this resolution calling on California State Department of Parks and Recreation to designate Calaveras Big Trees State Park a top priority in directing allocated funding for immediate catastrophic wildfire prevention. This resolution serves as a call to action for better forest management, increased execution of resilience treatments, and stronger giant sequoia conservation.

Whereas, giant sequoia are among the largest and oldest living things on the planet. They sequester carbon in a warming world, and contribute to cleaner air and water. They support a bustling economy on public lands, drawing millions of visitors through local communities. They were among the first inspirations for federal-level conservation; in 1890, Sequoia National Park was the first national park created specifically to protect a living organism. Calaveras Big Trees State Park was established in 1931.

Whereas, a warming planet has created hotter and longer droughts which today overlay a century of fire suppression that has choked forests with thick undergrowth. This means trees are competing with each other for water, nutrients and sunlight, and become more susceptible to disease and insects. Continued fire-suppression efforts have left forest floors densely carpeted with fuels that have produced a dramatic increase in fire extent. Combined, these conditions have changed how wildfires burn, a sign of ferocious fire behavior known as a running crown fire, resulting in large areas of high severity fire effects and massive fire events.

Whereas, blazes so intense to burn hot enough and high enough to kill giant sequoias — trees once considered nearly fire-proof — put an exclamation point on climate change's impact. This has recently become the death knell for trees dating to ancient civilizations, namely the coast redwood and the giant sequoia of the Sierra. Lightning-sparked wildfires in California over the past 18 months have destroyed anywhere from 13% to 19% of the total population of the sequoia, according to new figures from a National Park Service report. Together, three fires accounted for losses up to a fifth of the roughly 75,000 sequoias greater than 4 feet in diameter. (www.nps.gov/seki/learn/gslc.htm).

Whereas, despite State Parks' and CALFIRE's significant efforts to reduce fire risk at Big Basin State Park, numerous ignition points, dry conditions, wildfire intensity and subsequent crown fires decimated most of that park's trees as well as nearly all structures and infrastructure. Calaveras Big Trees State Park lies within a very high fire risk area, much of which has not seen significant fire in over 100 years. Our Park and the surrounding communities are at severe risk of catastrophic wild fire. We need to protect the remaining old growth and make our Sierra Nevada forests wildfire resilient, "because the fire's coming."

Whereas, pile burning or controlled burns of massive amounts of materials can lead to shallow root damage of the sequoia over 100 feet from the base of a tree. As advocated by CALFIRE, forests should be restoratively thinned and trees limbed up, and most debris should be removed or masticated *prior* to burns to help restore the natural conditions for sequoia to thrive. California needs to mirror the Federal approach of clearing the sequoia forests of fuels followed by periodic controlled burns to keep them healthy and fire resilient.

Whereas, treatments should prioritize reducing stand density, increasing crown-based height, reducing crown bulk density, and removing surface fuels to promote desired fire behavior. We recognize that implementing these treatments at a pace and scale sufficient to affect change at the landscape level currently is a challenge. Thus, we urge you to prioritize treatment pursuant to the adopted fire resilience plan without hesitation (<https://fmtf.fire.ca.gov/media/cjwfpckz/californiawildfireandforestresilienceactionplan.pdf>).

Now let it be resolved, that Calaveras Big Trees Association hereby urges the California Department of Parks and Recreation to give Calaveras Big Trees State Park a top priority for fuel reduction action to return our forest to its natural healthy state and reduce wildfire risk, while recognizing that periodic fire is an essential part of these ecosystems.

Be it also resolved, that Calaveras Big trees Association joins with Save the Redwoods League, Giant Sequoia Lands Coalition and other conservation organizations calling for commitment to actively manage the State's forests.

Be it also resolved, that Big Trees State Park's reliance on small scale prescribed burns has been problematic, due to numerous constraints, but mostly because of the narrowing of periods during which they can occur to just a few days a year. This has exacerbated the problem by continued delays year after year while excessive fuel build up continues.

And be it further resolved, that we urge the California State Parks and Recreation Department and California Department of Fire Protection and any other involved organizations to reduce the unnatural build-up of vegetation that is the result of decades of fire suppression, followed by periodic controlled burning. Additionally, we urge the Department to provide for adequate staffing to support the immediate work as well as long-term maintenance efforts following the restorative work.

This is a certified copy of resolution adopted and approved January 26, 2022 by the Calaveras Big Trees Association Board.



Vida Kenk
President
Calaveras Big Trees Association



Paul Prescott
Secretary
Calaveras Big Trees Association