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SAVE THE REDWOODS LEAGUE AND THE SKUNK TRAIN WORK TOGETHER TO REOPEN THE HISTORIC 'REDWOODS ROUTE' AND PRESERVE OLD-GROWTH FOREST

Agreement Enables Tunnel Restoration, Restores Public Access, Protects Old-Growth Forest from Threat of Logging and Supports Regional Economic Vitality



Photo courtesy of Skunk Train

SAN FRANCISCO (June 19, 2013) – [Save the Redwoods League](http://www.savetheredwoodsleague.org), the only nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting ancient redwood forests throughout their natural range, announced today that it has reached an agreement with the Mendocino Railway, owners and operators of the famous [Skunk Train](http://www.skunktrain.com), to provide \$300,000 to acquire an option for purchase of a conservation easement that will permanently protect the ancient redwoods along the train's famous "Redwoods Route" including the Noyo River Watershed. Owners of the Mendocino Railway have indicated that they intend to use the funds from

the option purchase, along with public donations, for repair of a tunnel that collapsed in April 2013. The conservation easement will be developed over a three-year period, enabling Save the Redwoods League and the Skunk Train to work together on a comprehensive plan to best protect the trees.

Repairs to the damaged tunnel will begin immediately. The first trains are expected to be up and running from Willits to Northspur in the first part of July with full service restored by mid-July.

The summer months are imperative economically to the train and also to the surrounding region, as many local businesses such as hotels, restaurants and shops rely on income resulting from visitors traveling to the area to ride the Skunk Train. The train carries approximately 45,000 visitors annually on its famous 40-mile "Redwoods Route" and adds an estimated \$20 million annually to the Mendocino County economy. The Skunk Train attracts visitors from around the world, many who experience redwoods for the first time.

"We were pleased the owner of the Skunk Train contacted us about the tunnel, as he was concerned over potentially having to sell some of the Redwood trees to timber companies in order for the railway to survive," said Harry Pollack, COO and acting executive director of Save the Redwoods League. "Protecting the old-growth forest and historic access through the redwoods is directly in line with the League's mission."

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"The Skunk Train is vital to the local economy, and without it, the whole area suffers," said Robert Pinoli, president of the Skunk Train. "Summer is our biggest season, and that's why I'm so grateful to Save the Redwoods League for quickly coming to the rescue, enabling us to have the train up and running, hopefully by the first or second week in July, and for working with us to permanently protect the redwoods. Our agreement will allow visitors to enjoy the redwoods now and for generations into the future."

Initially Pinoli appealed to the public for the funds needed to make the repairs and potentially faced the prospect of having to sell some of the trees to raise the money. The League quickly responded, offering to acquire a conservation easement that will permanently protect threatened redwood trees along the Skunk Train's railway corridor and in turn provide the immediate funding needed to repair the tunnel and restore public access to the redwood forest between Fort Bragg and Willits.

Save the Redwoods League and the Skunk Train/Mendocino Railway have a history of working together. In 2011, the League purchased the 426-acre Noyo River Redwoods to prevent the previous owner from harvesting the ancient trees under an approved Timber Harvest Plan. The Skunk Train's route winds through six miles of the Noyo River Redwoods, and the Train's owners were instrumental in helping the League raise funds to complete the purchase.

About Save the Redwoods League

For more than 90 years, Save the Redwoods League has been dedicated to protecting the ancient redwood forests so all generations can experience the inspiration and majesty of redwoods. In 1850, there were nearly 2 million acres of ancient coast redwood forests in California. Today, less than 5 percent remains and faces threats from unsustainable logging practices, poorly planned development and global climate change. Since its founding in 1918, the League has completed the purchase of more than 189,000 acres of forestland. For more information or to make a donation, please visit SaveTheRedwoods.org, or to receive monthly e-mail updates, sign up at SaveTheRedwoods.org/signup.

About Skunk Train

Built as a logging railroad in 1885 by Charles R. Johnson, the Skunk line was a vehicle for moving massive redwood logs to the Mendocino Coast sawmills from the rugged back country and played a vital role in transporting families and workers who set up the various logging camps along the route. Since the mid 90s, it has served purely as a railway line for the public's enjoyment, with vintage trains traveling the famous 40-mile "Redwoods Route" through ancient redwood forests, over trestle bridges, through tunnels and past open meadows. Approximately 45,000 visitors ride the Skunk Train yearly. For more information please visit <http://www.skunktrain.com>

Editors, please note: To schedule an interview with Save the Redwoods League, please contact Gretchen Krueger at 925-914-0102/gretchen@landispr.com or Tarah Beaven at 415-561-0888/Tarah@landispr.com.

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