



Mike Shoys/Courtesy of Save the Redwoods League

SONOMA COUNTY

Untouched Redwood Grove to Become a Public Park

Thanks to a preservation group, a massive old-growth forest will get its first visitors

By Jessica Sebor

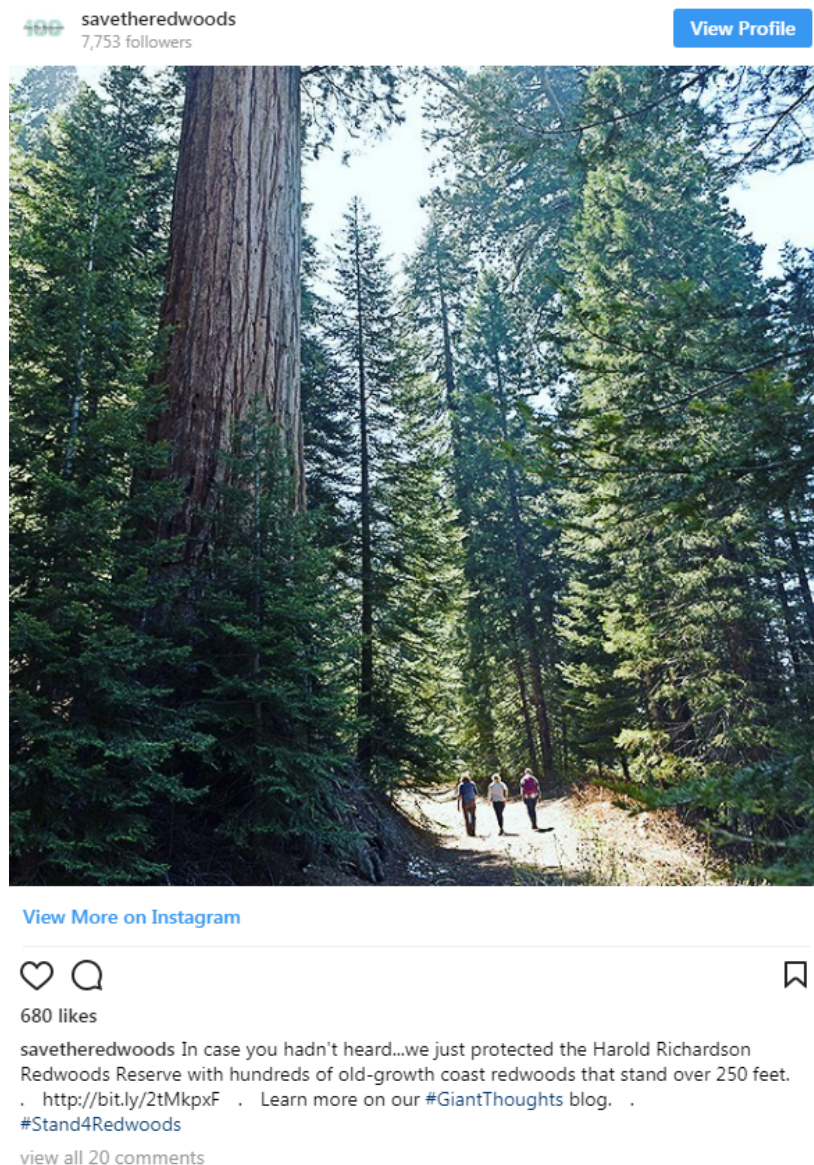
“Deep in a ravine through a forest of trees more than 500 years old, there’s a waterfall that comes cascading over moss-covered boulders, surrounded by old-growth redwoods,” says Sam Hodder, president of the 100-year-old nonprofit [Save the Redwoods League](#).

The dreamy landscape Hodder describes is just one of his favorite spots in a 738-acre reserve that Save the Redwoods League recently purchased for \$18.1 million. The so-called [Harold Richardson Reserve](#) is located along the coastline in [Sonoma County](#). Following the purchase, Save the Redwoods League is transforming the formerly private land into a park that’s open to the public.

One of the first residents of a nearby, blufftop hamlet called [Stewart’s Point](#), Herbert Archer Richardson bought the forest in 1918 for the value of its lumber. The trees were never harvested, though, and when Herbert’s grandson, Harold Richardson, inherited the forest, he committed to leaving the majestic land alone.

For nearly two decades, [Save the Redwoods League](#), with its mission of restoring and protesting California’s forests, had been in talks with the family to encumber the old-growth-filled area, a slice

of the larger 8,000 acre ranch, with a conservation easement. “With the passing of Harold Richardson a year and a half ago, the family was encouraged to protect the property,” Hodder explains, and the deal was finalized in 2018.



Save the Redwoods League plans to open the area to the public in 2021. Only 100 miles north of San Francisco, the Harold Richardson Redwood Reserve is 30 percent larger than [Muir Woods National Monument](#) and has nearly half as many more old-growth redwoods. It's home to the largest redwood tree south of [Humboldt County](#) and the oldest tree south of [Mendocino](#). “There hasn't been a new old-growth park of this scale in many, many years,” says Hodder. “It's a little glimpse into what this part of the Sonoma Coast looked like before the Gold Rush. To protect a forest that's been hiding in plain sight at this family ranch is extraordinary.”



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2ZHMZvDZMI>

In the meantime, there are other breath-taking places to see redwoods in the Golden State.

Check out our [Insider's Guide to the California's Redwood Coast](#).

<https://bit.ly/2N9mqfb>