



Santa Cruz Bird Club
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July 28, 2026

To: Santa Cruz District, California Department of Parks and Recreation Attn: Will Fourt

I (Jane Orbuch, Santa Cruz Bird Club Conservation Officer) attended via Zoom the hearing on the Final Big Basin EIR back on July 2nd and presented the stance of the Santa Cruz Bird Club (SCBC) on the Final EIR. The Club wanted to reach out to you in writing with a suggestion while you are getting ready to implement the new vision for the park.

First though, we would like to thank you and the many others involved in the planning process of Reimagining Big Basin for your vision and efforts to keep human impacts down in the Old Growth Area. We applaud the removal of most camping from the area and the continued implementation of the “Crumb Clean Campaign,” all of which protect the California Endangered and Federally Threatened Marbled Murrelet.

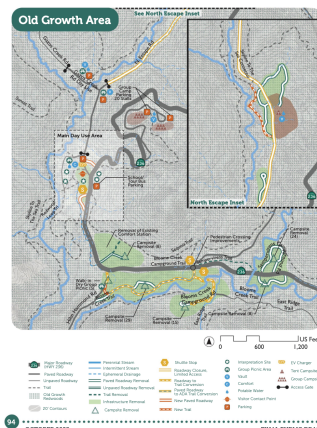
However, the SCBC is still concerned with the proposed Gazos picnic areas and dishwashing stations at North Escape Road (see graphic below). This is the only known nesting site of murrelets in Big Basin after the CZU Fire. No matter how robust the education campaigns are, people are fallible and can leave waste and crumbs at a picnic area and dishwashing station, which is exactly what attracts corvids to the last possible foothold of the murrelet in the park. Both the Sierra Club and Center for Biological Diversity responded to draft EIR in April 2026 and addressed the “insufficient details on triggering mechanisms to change human visitation patterns” if there were impacts on murrelet nesting—there are still a lot of unknowns about murrelets after the CZU fire.

The SCBC suggests that for the foreseeable future there should be NO picnic area or other human infrastructure in the North Escape area except for trails or roads which do not attract ravens and jays. Murrelets need more than signs and education—they require robust monitoring efforts and need time to recover their numbers. It seems sensible to keep these picnic areas at North Escape closed and tables removed. May we further suggest that the Gazos Creek East and West Picnic areas and dishwashing station be shifted to a lower priority from “Phase 1-Immediate Implementation” to perhaps “Phase 3-Longer Term Enhancements”-- acknowledging the need to “limit disturbance to ecological systems (p131 of Final Public Draft)”. This would enable more robust and continued monitoring of the recovery of the Marbled Murrelets before we tempt fate with visitors camping, picnicking and washing dishes in this Old Growth Forest area.

A reply would be greatly appreciated as would any continued discussion.
Thanks for your consideration,

Bob Meads, SCBC President

Jane Orbuch, SCBC Conservation Officer



North Escape Road Program Description		Total Size/Quantity
Visitor Facilities		
Picnic Area		-40,000 sqft
Gazos East group picnic area		-40,000 sqft
Gazos East food with potable water supply and dishwash station		-12 sqft
Gazos West group picnic area		-40,000 sqft
Gazos West food with potable water supply and dishwash station		-12 sqft
Overnight Facilities		
Trail Camp Area		-12 sqft
Trail Camp food with potable water supply and dishwash station		-12 sqft
Restoration		
Former Picnic Area		-48 sqft
Removal of former picnic table and stone steps		-48 sqft
Transportation		
Parking		-40 sqft
Gazos East Group Picnic Parking (gravel)		-40 sqft
Gazos West Group Picnic Parking (gravel)		-40 sqft
Former Campgrounds Program Description		
Visitor Facilities		
Picnic Area		-40,000 sqft
Removal of picnic area to create trail		-40,000 sqft
Restoration		
Substructure Removal		-100 sqft
Removal of substructure in former Campgrounds		-100 sqft
Transportation		
Trail Connection		-1,000 sqft
Trail to 100-Year Connection		-1,000 sqft
Sequoia Program Description		
Overnight Facilities		
Campsite		-40,000 sqft
Two rustic group campsite (10,000 sqft each)		-40,000 sqft
Rustic food with potable water supply and dishwash station		-12 sqft
Transportation		
Parking		-40 sqft
Group camp parking (gravel)		-40 sqft