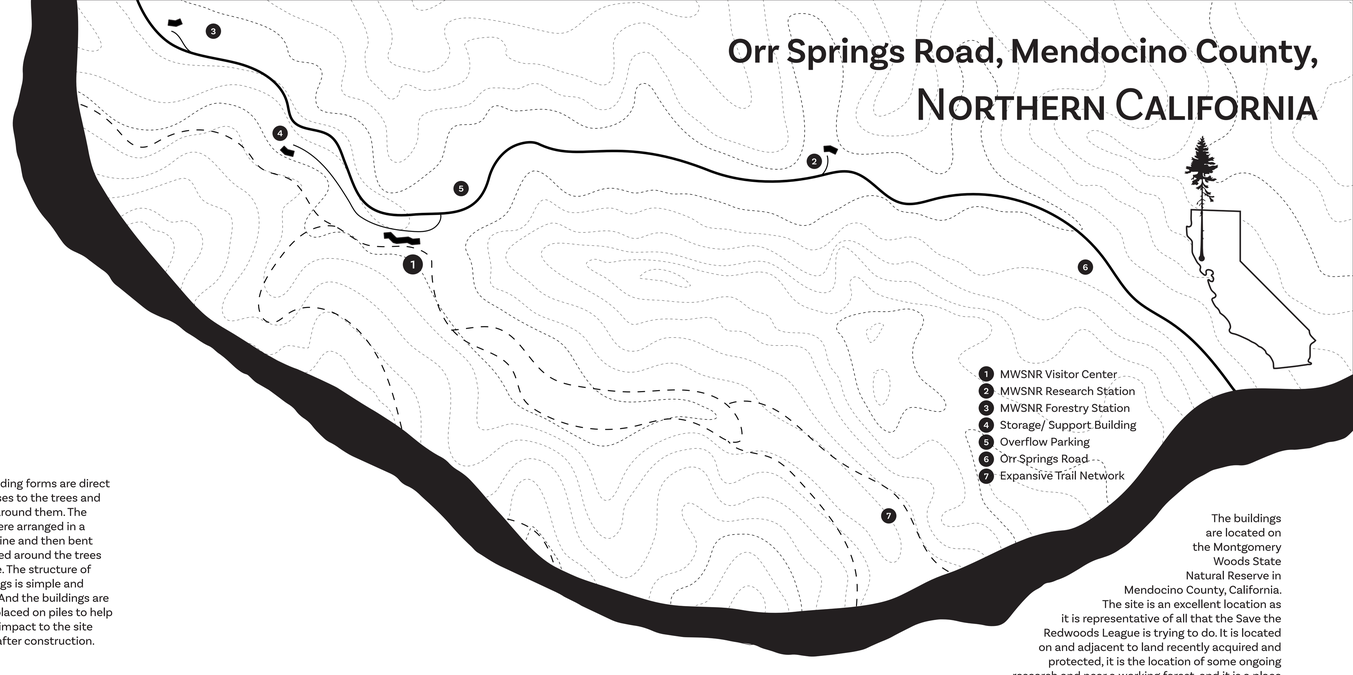
Orr Springs Road, Mendocino County, Northern California

The building forms are direct responses to the trees and forest around them. The plans were arranged in a straight line and then bent and twisted around the trees on the site. The structure of the buildings is simple and repetitive. And the buildings are lifted and placed on piles to help reduce the impact to the site during and after construction.



The buildings are located on the Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve in Mendocino County, California. The site is an excellent location as it is representative of all that the Save the Redwoods League is trying to do. It is located on and adjacent to land recently acquired and protected, it is the location of some ongoing research and near a working forest, and it is a place that is quite inspiring to visit.

Protect Restore Connect

Using Architecture To Help Save The Redwoods

The Coast Redwoods of northern California are worth protecting. Since times when the dinosaurs shook the earth with every step, the even more massive coast redwoods have stood tall. These trees are sacred to many Native American tribes, home to hundreds of species, many of which are endangered, the tallest trees in the world, and are simply unbelievable.

In the 1850's the trees were discovered by American settlers moving west in search of gold. When they found these trees, some saw an opportunity to make money and began cutting the trees down with nothing but financial prosperity in mind. For almost a century the trees were cut down like this, and today only five percent of historic old-growth forests still exist.

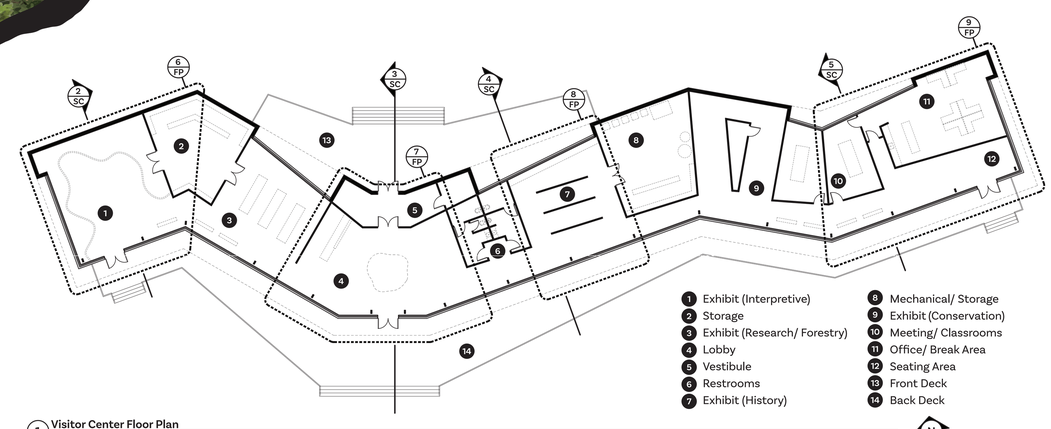
With some conservation efforts underway, the trees are beginning to have a more promising future. One organization leading the charge is the Save the Redwoods League. The League has three main tactics for helping the trees; Protect, Restore, and Connect.

To Protect, the League acquires unprotected redwood forests and safeguards them from future logging or development.

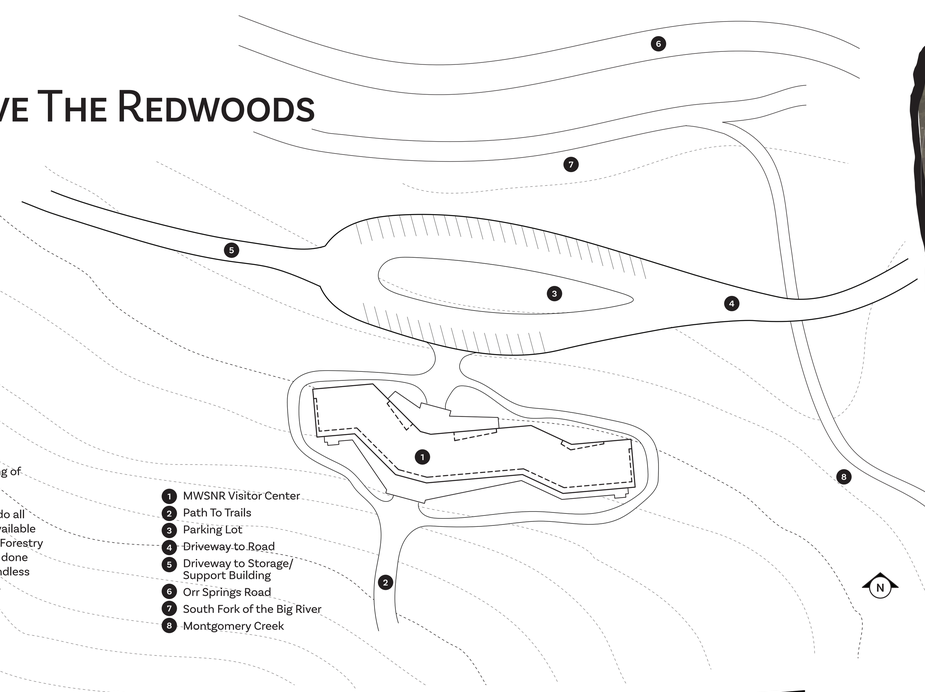
To Restore, the League funds research and forest management efforts to help us understand and rebuild healthy ecosystems.

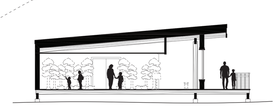
To Connect, the League tries to increase public engagement and promote a general understanding of the trees.

The Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve Visitor Center and its accompanying buildings do all they can to help promote these three areas of focus. The Visitor Center itself has resources available for organizations to raise funds or promote protecting the forests. The Research and Forestry Stations provide space and equipment for the important work that needs to be done to properly restore old-growth groves. And the entire complex allows visitors endless opportunities to walk amongst and learn about the amazing Coast Redwoods.

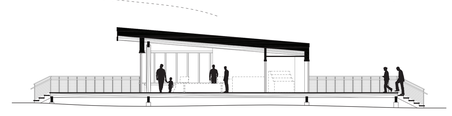


1 Visitor Center Floor Plan
3/32" = 1'



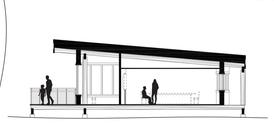


2 Interpretive Exhibit Section Cut
1/8" = 1'

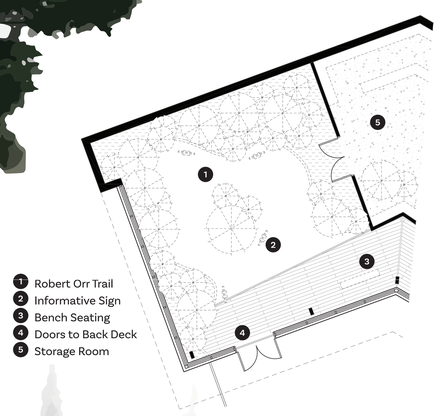


3 Entry/ Lobby Section Cut
1/8" = 1'

4 History Exhibit Section Cut
1/8" = 1'

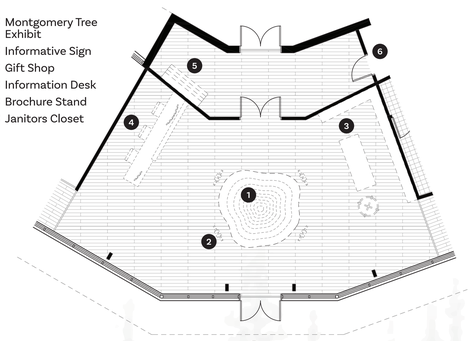


5 Meeting Room Section Cut
1/8" = 1'



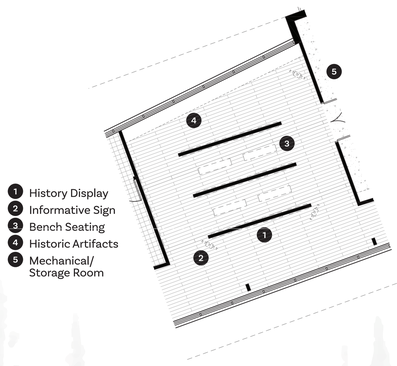
6 Interpretive Exhibit Floor Plan
3/16" = 1'

The Interpretive Exhibit at the Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve Visitor Center provides a unique learning opportunity for visitors. Targeted towards a younger audience, the Interpretive Exhibit is a scaled old-growth forest. It shows and educates it's viewers about all the tiny details that make up these massive forests. Children are able to walk amongst the trees and see them from a whole new perspective.



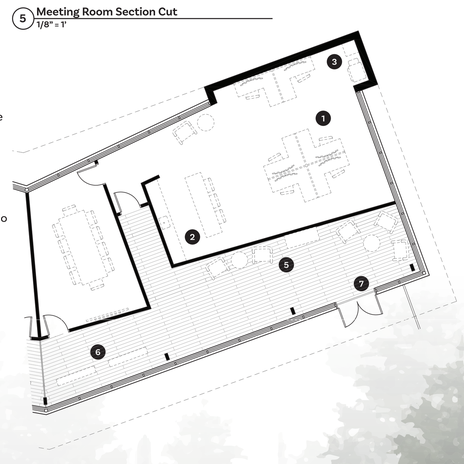
7 Entry/ Lobby Floor Plan
3/16" = 1'

The Lobby at the Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve Visitor Center creates an immediate and impactful experience for visitor. Showing off all that the center is trying to promote, it has expansive views of the beautiful the trees, a touching exhibit that illustrates the enormity, age, and resilience of the trees, tons of information about the site and it's trees, and more. A wonderful place for a visit to start.



8 History Exhibit Floor Plan
3/16" = 1'

The History Exhibit at the Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve Visitor Center is one of the five educational exhibits on site. This exhibit provides a holistic understanding of the trees past's, making it easier for us to care about them and ensure their future. From times before white settlers, to the felling of the first redwood, to the extensive logging, and to early conservation efforts, there is a lot to learn.



9 Office Area Floor Plan
3/16" = 1'

The Office Area at the Montgomery Woods State Natural Reserve Visitor Center is where a lot of the work gets done. It provides resources for the researchers to input data, space for foresters to record information, and a place for park rangers and staff to work. Meeting rooms are also available and can even be used as a classroom space for educational purposes.