

A Brief History of the Mendocino Woodlands Outdoor Center

Timeline for a National Historic Landmark

- 1933: When Congress passed Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal Plan, the Federal Government began buying up "submarginal" farm land to be developed for "recreational uses by the Park Service." The 5425 acre *Mendocino Woodlands Recreation Demonstration Area* reaches from 5 miles up the Little North Fork of Big River, west to the coastal town of Mendocino. The National Park Service built 46 New Deal Parks; the Mendocino Woodlands and Camp David (the presidential retreat) remain.
- 1938: July 4, first Campers in Camp I--Contra Costa County Family and Children's camps. Work continued on Camp I, started on Camp II.
- 1943: All three camps completed; average annual use: 10,500. Congress authorized the National Park Service to turn Woodlands over to the State with an In-Perpetuity Gift Mandate from the Federal Government: "*Said property shall be used exclusively for public park, recreational, and conservation purposes.*" (Congress by Act of June 6, 1942 [56 Stats. 326; 16 USCA, 459r-459t])
- 1947: The State did not want to absorb the future costs of maintaining the Woodlands and in an effort to sell it, placed it with the Division of Forestry as a part of Jackson State Forest, because they were able to offer land for sale.
- 1948: The Department of Forestry is not set up for recreational management, and, unable to sell it, turned management over to the Mendocino Woodlands Camp Association, a private, non-profit corporation made up of representatives from the groups that use the Woodlands. The Association was created by the State for the specific purpose of managing the Woodlands and carrying out the In-Perpetuity Gift Mandate from the Federal Government.
- 1976: Rather than budget moneys to repair the 40-year-old buildings, the Department of Forestry made plans to raze the facility and harvest the timber. To resolve the controversy that erupted from this announcement, Senate Bill 1063 transferred the 720 acres containing the buildings of the Woodlands to the Department of Parks & Recreation, and designated a 2550 acre Special Treatment Area (STA) buffer around the facility to protect the historic hiking trails, domestic and waste water systems. Harvest plans were canceled in the STA, though jurisdiction remained with Forestry.
- 1997: The Mendocino Woodlands Camp Association, having managed the Woodlands for 50 consecutive years, signed a 10-year Concessionaires Agreement with a 10 year renewal option and adopted a Plan of Action to restore the historic buildings within the park seeking funds generated from private and industrial sectors. Annual use in 1997--30,000. On September 25, 1997 the Woodlands was listed as a National Historic Landmark.