

Former Redwood Youth Hostel to be demolished

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Citing concerns for public safety, major structural damage, seismic deficiencies, vandalism, and sensitivity to the cultural significance of the site to both the Tolowa and Yurok people, Redwood National and State Parks officials said they're planning to demolish and remove the former Redwood Youth Hostel.

"There's still important cultural and historic values there, but the house itself isn't a part of those values," said David Roemer, a National Parks Service deputy superintendent.

Removal is planned in the near future. The work is being contracted in partnership with the Yurok Tribe.

As early as 2001, said officials, the National Park Service began working to correct the hostel's safety and construction deficiencies, including a failing septic system, decking, fire escape and escape landing. An assessment in 2008 identified additional needed health, safety and American Disability Act repairs, plus deficiencies in seismic vulnerability that needed to be corrected for the building to be occupied.

The estimated cost for all needed work at that time totaled more than \$1.5 million, exceeding the current replacement value of the building by more than 200%, a figure that would be significantly higher today.

The hostel was closed for safety reasons in 2010. Since then, officials said, Redwood National and State Parks law-enforcement rangers and maintenance staff have tried to protect the property against vandals and squatters, but gates, locks, plywood covers and routine patrols have proved unsuccessful.

“We haven’t been able to keep people out of it, and the illegal entry is really concerning and dangerous,” Roemer said.

Before the building was converted to a hostel in 1987, it had a long connection with Del Norte County’s ranching and dairy industry of the early 1900s. But while its exterior retained a historical look and feel, the building was determined ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and in 1986 it was converted to a hostel by the park service.

Before it was the site of the DeMartin dairy ranch, the mouth of Wilson Creek has been significant for a considerable period of time to the Yurok people as Omen hee puer and to the Tolowa as Daa-gheslh-ts’a’. During meetings with the National Park Service, members of the Yurok Tribe, Elk Valley Rancheria and Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation expressed concerns about protecting the area’s cultural resources.

“The Yurok Tribe is pleased to see the hostel removed from our village site,” said Rosie Clayburn, the Yurok tribal heritage preservation officer. “We would like to thank Redwood National Park for hiring our crew to perform the demolition work.

“As the Yurok watershed restoration team dismantles the failing building and restores the site to a natural environment, great care will be taken to protect our cultural resources.”

“Because so many people loved the hostel and love hosteling the Redwood National and State Parks, we really want to find the right combination of place and partner if we are going to do that again,” Roemer said.

After demolition, a separate project will be sought to return the site to a natural state, said officials.

They said the park service is open to exploring partnerships for hosteling or other low-cost accommodations, including the possibility of adapting certain existing park structures.