

Past & Present

Big Creek Lumber is a family-owned and operated company that has been serving Central California since 1946. We currently operate five retail lumber yards, a sawmill, wholesale division, forestry department, and logging operation.



The business was founded in 1946 by Frank McCrary, Sr., his brother-in-law Homer Trumbo, and two sons, Frank “Lud” McCrary Jr., and Homer “Bud” McCrary. Big Creek Lumber owns timberland and manages timber for private landowners, harvests timber, and operates a sawmill, manufacturing facility, wholesale division and five Pro Dealer retail sales yards.

We take great pride in a long history of superior forest stewardship. We utilize a framework of progressive and conservative forest management practices, like selective harvest, to manage viable redwood forests that will remain productive and enjoyable for future generations. Big Creek Lumber is the first wood-products company operating within a redwood forest to have company lands awarded the “Well Managed Forest” Certification by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)®.

We have a long-standing reputation for the high quality of the products we produce.

Big Creek Lumber’s sawmill and wholesale divisions manufacture and sell a wide variety of redwood lumber to lumberyards and manufacturers. Our mill produces a range of different grades suited to a wide variety of uses and applications. Customers at our retail locations can expect expertise and extensive product knowledge from our employees. We aim to foster meaningful relationships with our customers that result in mutually beneficial business interactions for years to come.

History of Big Creek Lumber

The history of Big Creek Lumber is an integral part of what the company is today and extends back much further than the seventy-plus years we have been in business. In the spring of 1863, Joshua Grinnell, along with his wife and young step-son Vid Trumbo, started the journey west via wagon train from their home state of Iowa. Grinnell, already familiar with the central coast of California from his time spent working on whaling ships in the area, settled his family in Santa Cruz County at the end of the year and a half long journey. By 1869 he was able to mine enough gold along Major's Creek and its tributaries north of Santa Cruz to buy a 147-acre tract of land and start a small farm along Big Creek in the area now known as Swanton. Seven generations later, his descendants, the McCrary's, still call the area home.

Frank McCrary Sr. arrived in the Swanton area from Alaska in 1920. Along with a brother who had preceded him to the area by two years, he made a living making redwood split stuff, doing carpentry work and operating a shingle mill. McCrary woodsmanship and Big Creek land were joined in 1924 when Frank married Vid Trumbo's daughter, Agnes.



Big Creek Lumber got its official start in 1946 when Frank and his two sons Bud and Lud returned from overseas service in World War II, and, in partnership with Agnes's brother Homer Trumbo, formed the Big Creek Timber Company. With \$7500 in cash and war bonds, surplus military equipment modified to fit their needs, a homemade mill nicknamed "The Termite," axes and cross-cut saws, the quartet set out to log portions of Mill and Scotts Creeks.

In 1947 the company purchased the timber rights on a piece of property in Waddell Canyon from Theodore Hoover. The company constructed a sawmill several miles up Waddell Creek Canyon, and in 1948, built a small planing mill along Highway 1 near Greyhound Rock where lumber from the sawmill was surfaced. By 1955, the sawmill was producing 35,000 board feet per day.

After several location shifts due to natural disasters, fire, and property acquisitions, the sawmill came to rest in its current location in 1964 above Highway 1 just south of Waddell Canyon, joined by an office, planing mill, forestry department and maintenance shop.

Big Creek Lumber operates five Pro Dealer retail yards in Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Paso Robles, Atwater and Half Moon Bay.

Today, Big Creek Lumber's mill cuts, planes and processes approximately 100,000 board feet of lumber each day. The company employs approximately 200 employees at six locations. The Davenport location includes manufacturing, wholesale, maintenance shop, forestry and administration facilities. Big Creek Lumber also operates five Pro Dealer retail yards in Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Paso Robles, Atwater and Half Moon Bay that provide a comprehensive selection of lumber and building materials and services to professional contractors and homeowners. Big Creek Lumber now owns timberland in Santa Cruz, Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, and manages land for a number of other private landowners.



Since Joshua Grinnell's arrival on Big Creek in 1869, his descendants have recognized their important relationship with the land they steward. From it, the McCrary family receives its livelihood, identity and lifestyle. The success of the business allows them to retain the land and maintain its nearly natural state. This conscientious stewardship is one of the main reasons Big Creek Lumber has been widely recognized for its strong environmental ethics. Throughout the past 70-plus years, Big Creek Lumber has taken the initiative to find solutions to the environmental and aesthetic concerns frequently associated with logging and has been a leader in setting standards for responsible forestry practices. Big Creek Lumber has been the recipient of many awards acknowledging these efforts, including the prestigious Francis H. Raymond Award in recognition of outstanding contributions to forestry in California, the California Department of Fish & Game Private Sector Award in recognition of outstanding wildlife achievement, and the Well Managed Forest Certification by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)®.

Lud and Bud McCrary held the leadership role for Big Creek for many decades. In 2009 they stepped down from their positions as President and Vice President but both remain a part of the

business and serve on Board of Directors. After years in the business Lud's daughter Janet McCrary Webb took over as Company President in addition to her role as Chief Forester. Lud's daughter Ellen Rinde and Bud's son Ken McCrary became Vice Presidents. These three form the core of a terrific leadership team. We are proud that there are currently seven McCrary family members employed at Big Creek Lumber, including one 4th generation employee.

Lud and Bud McCrary like to point out that the forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains are in better health today than when they first started logging with their dad and uncle in 1946. Today, the stump of the first tree that Lud McCrary and Homer Trumbo cut by hand sprouts a 30-inch diameter, 150 foot tall redwood.

Forestry & Landowners

Overview

Big Creek Lumber's forest management objectives are influenced by philosophy and a decades-old respect for our local forests. At the founding of the company in 1946, we envisioned managing forest resources in a manner that was sustainable from both a business and environmental perspective. Since we first began harvesting timber over seven decades ago, our company has been at the forefront of pioneering many progressive and protective forest management practices.

“Our Forests are our Legacy.” — Bud McCrary

Over the years, a number of these practices have been adopted as state regulations specific to timber harvesting operations in Santa Cruz, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. These practices include the use of selective harvesting, riparian setbacks, improved road design to minimize erosion, and special methods for treating logging slash. Big Creek Lumber's commitment to practicing responsible forest management has garnered many commendations over the years, including the prestigious Francis H. Raymond Award “In Recognition of Outstanding Contributions to Forestry in California” from the California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, and the “Private Sector Award for Outstanding Wildlife Conservation” from the California Department of Fish and Game. We are also the first wood products company operating in a redwood forest to have company lands awarded the “Well Managed Forest” certification by the Forest Conservation Program of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)®.



Services

In addition to managing its own timberland, Big Creek Lumber provides comprehensive forest management services to other private timberland owners. Big Creek Lumber is committed to practicing the same high level of forestland management on client lands as we do on our own properties. Many of our clients have developed partnerships with us for long-term continuing management and as a result have been able to meet a wide range of forest management objectives, including:

- Increased forest vigor, timber growth, and forest income potential,
- Reduced soil erosion through road maintenance and restoration,
- Diminished fire hazard through reduction of fuels,
- Improved forestland access through well-designed roads,
- Enhanced wildlife habitat and water quality through site restoration, and
- Valuable educational opportunities in resource management.

Big Creek Lumber is able to provide you with customized forestry services through our strong working relationships with government agencies.

For land owners interested in managing the timber on their property, Big Creek Lumber's skilled and professional forestry staff offers a complete package of forestry services. These services include resource assessment, development of timber harvest plans, oversight of harvest operations and purchase of logs. Big Creek Lumber is able to provide you with customized forestry services through our strong working relationships with government agencies, other forest landowners, and the local community by utilizing either our own highly skilled logging crew or qualified contractors.

Residential Tree Removal

Big Creek Lumber does not offer residential tree removal, however we frequently purchase redwood logs from these tree removal projects. You can work with a local licensed timber operator who can be able to help you with obtaining the proper permits. For the most current list of licensed timber operators see the most current list of [licensed timber operators](#) here.



Meet Our Forestry Team

Our team is comprised of a diverse group of talented individuals with a wide range of experience who are dedicated to fulfilling Big Creek Lumber's long-term commitment to responsible forestry.

Janet McCrary Webb

President and Chief Forester, Registered Professional Forester #2347

Received a Bachelor of Science in Forest Management from Humboldt State University in 1983. As a McCrary family member and Big Creek Lumber owner, Janet brings a wide perspective of the forest products industry to the department.

Bob Reynolds

Operations Forester, Registered Professional Forester #2636

Received a degree in Forest Management from the College of the Redwoods. Bob has over 40 years of forestry operations experience with Big Creek Lumber.

Harlan Tranmer

Registered Professional Forester #2850

Received a Bachelor of Science in Forestry from California Polytechnic State University in 2000 and spent several years working in the University's forestlands in Santa Cruz County. Harlan worked as a consulting forester in Sonoma County for 7 years prior to joining our team at Big Creek Lumber.

Dennis Webb

Registered Professional Forester #3064

Received a Bachelor of Science in Forestry and Natural Resources from California Polytechnic State University in 2015. Dennis grew up in Swanton only a stone's throw from Big Creek Lumber's sawmill. Dennis comes to our forestry staff with experience from Big Creek Lumber's logging crew and his time spent cruising timber in the Sierra Nevada.

Kevin Hurt

Staff Forester

Received a Bachelor of Science in Forestry and Natural Resources from California Polytechnic State University in 2016. Kevin brings his experience in selection forestry and forest ecology research.

Bob Berlage

Forestry Communications

Received a Bachelor of Arts from Utah State University in 1973, PhD candidate, University of Utah. Bob spent 21 years as a timber faller, including 10 years as head timber faller for Big Creek Lumber. Bob has worked at Big Creek for over 35 years.

When you combine the hands-on experience of our foresters, it adds up to over a century of experience, providing the greatest depth of forest management knowledge in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Our forestry staff participate in a wide range of organizations including the California Licensed Foresters Association, the California Forestry Association, Forest Landowners of California, the California Farm Bureau Timber Advisory Committee, the California Redwood Association, the Central Coast Forestry Association, the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau, the Santa Cruz County Fire Department Advisory Committee, and the California Polytechnic State University Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Science Advisory Committee.

For further information about our forestry services please contact: forestryinfo@big-creek.com