

CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY

TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP POLICY



Photo by Kellie Brown from the Ocean Protection Council (OPC)
Celebrating the return of 46 acres of coastal wetlands to the Wiyot Tribe supported by funding from OPC.

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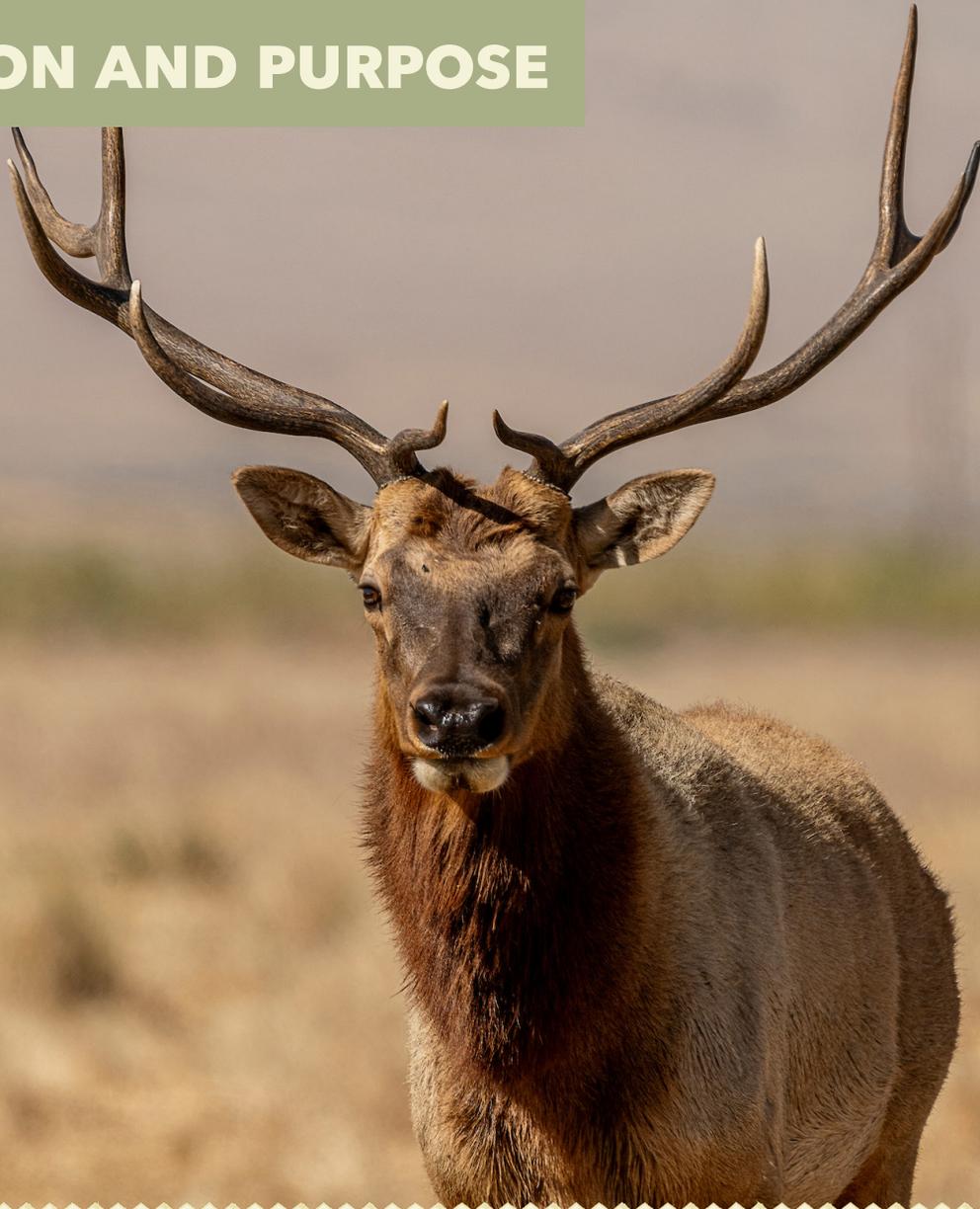
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VISION AND PURPOSE



THE TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP POLICY SETS FORTH A VISION FOR A NEW ERA OF TRIBAL-STATE PARTNERSHIPS IN THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND HEALING. THIS POLICY RECOGNIZES TRIBES' ROLE AS THE ORIGINAL STEWARDS OF LANDS AND WATERS IN CALIFORNIA AND SEEKS TO INSTITUTIONALIZE PRACTICES OF TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP IN THE IMPLEMENTATION THE AGENCY'S MISSIONS, REGULATIONS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS AND INVITE OTHERS TO JOIN US.

The California Natural Resources Agency (“Agency”) and its departments, conservancies, and commissions (herein “departments”) are charged with stewarding California’s unique natural, cultural, and historic resources. To fulfill this responsibility, it is critical that Agency and its departments build meaningful partnerships with California Native American tribes (“tribes”).

As sovereign nations and the original stewards of the lands and waters in California, tribes have exceptional expertise and experience managing our state’s environment and natural resources. Since time immemorial and into present day, California Native American tribes care for their homelands and help maintain ecological balance and health. These traditional practices and knowledge are critical as we confront modern environmental challenges and can guide Agency’s own stewardship of California’s environment.

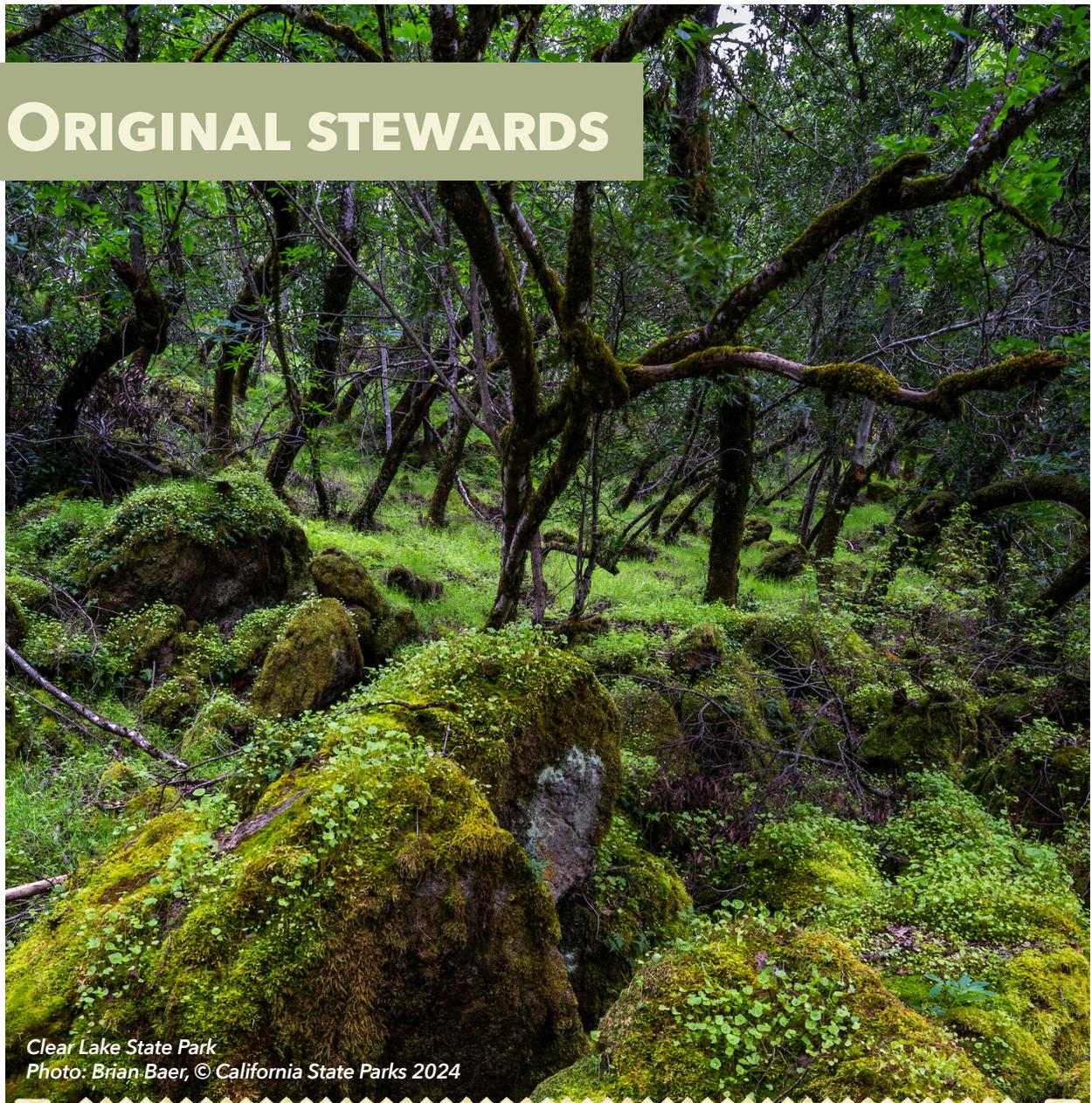
Collaborating with California Native American tribes requires that we first respect tribal sovereignty and acknowledge the state government’s historical treatment of California Native Americans. Over the last two centuries, the state has ignored this tribal stewardship and perpetuated historical wrongs, including forced removal of tribal communities from ancestral lands and criminalization of traditional practices and ceremonies. These actions greatly harmed the health and wellbeing of tribal communities and have present day ramifications still impacting tribes and the environment today. Further, state actions also caused the abandonment and criminalization of beneficial practices that maintained the health of our lands and waters.

In recent years, California has sought to establish a new era of tribal-state partnerships in the spirit of truth and healing. State leaders have acknowledged historic wrongs and many state agencies have worked to improve their own practices to enable effective, respectful collaboration with California Native American tribes. This progress includes strengthening tribal consultation practices, funding tribal ancestral land return, establishing tribal access agreements, and exploring models of collaborative tribal-state natural resources and land management relationships.

This Tribal Stewardship Policy directs Agency and its departments to institutionalize these practices and build lasting tribal partnerships in the implementation of each’s respective missions, regulations, policies, and programs. This Policy establishes the need and opportunity for tribal stewardship and provides standard practices for Agency to support tribal priorities. The Policy strongly encourages and offers these practices for use by non-tribal entities, whose partnership is necessary in achieving the goals defined by this Policy. The associated Tribal Stewardship Policy Toolkit builds the capacity of California Native American tribes, state agencies, and non-governmental entities to do this work together. The Toolkit takes form as a living website of recorded webinars, templates, case studies, and other informational resources.



ORIGINAL STEWARDS



Clear Lake State Park
Photo: Brian Baer, © California State Parks 2024

CALIFORNIA NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES HAVE STEWARDED CALIFORNIA'S LANDS AND WATERS SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL AND BRING DEEP EXPERTISE AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE TO THEIR STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES. THE LAND AND SPECIES HAVE CO-EVOLVED WITH TRIBES AND THE DISRUPTION OF TRIBAL EXPERTISE AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAND NOT ONLY IMPACTS TRIBAL COMMUNITIES' WAY OF LIFE BUT ALSO AFFECTS THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF ECOSYSTEMS THAT RELY ON TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP; AND IN TURN ALL CALIFORNIANS.

All the lands, waters, and natural resources within the boundaries of what is now known as California, have been - and still are - stewarded by diverse California Native American tribes.

Since time immemorial, California Native American tribes have developed and continue to practice deep, place-based societies, laws, ceremonies, customs, management practices, and ways of life in the stewardship and care of lands and natural resources. Before colonization, Native Americans, in what later became California, spoke over 100 distinct languages, stewarded and thrived in the unique and biodiverse ecosystems, and represent an array of diverse governments, cultural practices, and ways of life. Tribal sovereignty is inherent and existed before colonization. Tribal governments have the authority to make and enforce laws over their citizens and lands. Native Americans in California also have distinct and myriad cultural, spiritual, and religious relationships with their ancestral lands, with reciprocal relationships to the land and non-human beings. The strength of California Native American communities draws from this diversity and the dynamic and interconnected trading routes and economies across the continent.

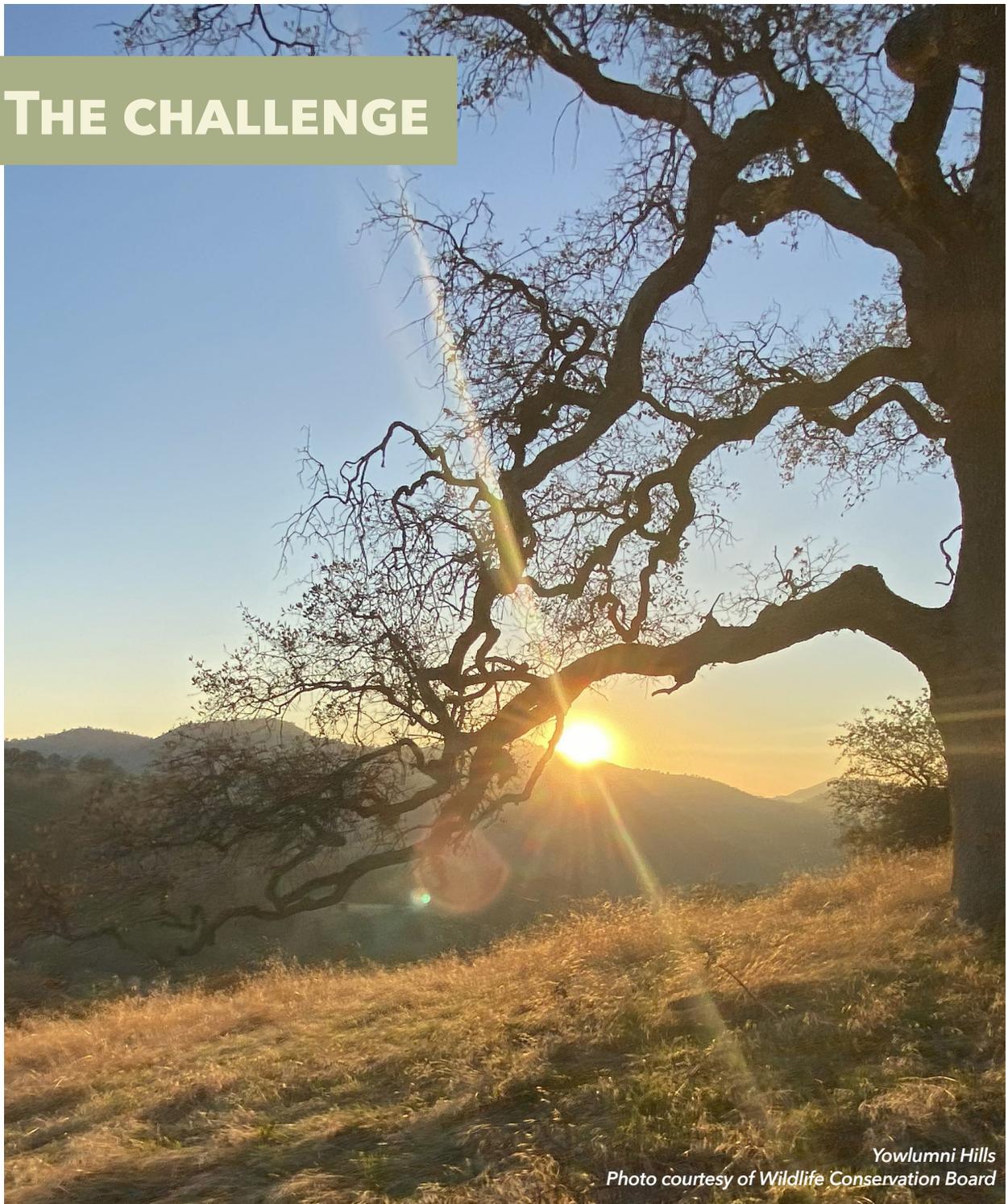
Tribal stewardship expertise, commonly referred to as Traditional Knowledge or Traditional Ecological Knowledge, blends the complexity of hunting and gathering knowledge, study of biology, and keen attention to environmental cues and microclimate variations with active cultural, ceremonial, and management practices to live in close relation to the lands and waters.¹ This knowledge and expertise are uniquely held by each tribe and their cultural practitioners, recognizing the tremendous cultural diversity of California Native American tribes.

Tribal societies rely on this expertise for physical, cultural, religious, and economic survival. As such, the land and species have co-evolved with tribes and the application and care of Traditional Ecological Knowledge. The disruption of this expertise and relationship to the land not only impacts tribal communities' way of life but also affects the health and wellbeing of ecosystems that rely on tribal stewardship; and in turn all Californians and the economy which are built on functioning ecosystems and natural resources.



¹ M. Kat Anderson, *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources* (University of California Press) (2013).

THE CHALLENGE



*Yowlumni Hills
Photo courtesy of Wildlife Conservation Board*

ACTIONS BY THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DURING ITS FIRST THREE YEARS OF STATEHOOD HAD AND CONTINUE TO HAVE DEVASTATING IMPACTS TO CALIFORNIA NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES.

California Native American tribes have survived multiple waves of colonialization from Russia, Spain, Mexico, and the United States that resulted in devastating impacts on the health and wellbeing of their communities and lands. The State of California's actions during its first three years of statehood from 1850 to 1853 began a long history of the state's historic wrongs committed against California Native American tribes. During this time:

- The State's first Governor, Peter Burnett, used his authority to advance a **"war of extermination... between the races, until the Indian race becomes extinct,"** as illustrated in his annual message to the State Legislature in **1851**. He and following California Governors called on and paid for civilian militias to attack Native Americans and advance this war of extermination.
- Governor Burnett and the California Legislature passed the **1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians**, also known as the Indian Indenture Act, that was used to indenture California Indian children and outlaw cultural and environmental stewardship practices of setting fire to prairies.¹
- **In mid-March 1852, the California Legislature sent resolutions to the U.S. Senate opposing the ratification of the 18 treaties** negotiated between the federal government and California Native American tribes across the state. Many tribes already felt that these treaties were inadequate, but facing the violence in their communities reluctantly agreed to them in good faith. **In these treaties, the United States promised to forever reserve and protect approximately 7.5 million acres of land for the permanent homelands of California Native American tribes.**² In a secret session, the U.S. Senate following the recommendation of the California Legislature refused to ratify the 18 treaties, thus breaking the previously agreed to promises. The fact that these treaties were not ratified was kept secret from tribes and the public for 50 years. During this time, tribes upheld their commitments made in the treaties and moved off much of their homelands.

These actions have had devastating impacts still felt today. Rejection of the treaties left tribes without secure homelands or access to resources. State militias and vigilante campaigns to kill Native American people increased, advancing attempted extermination and genocide. This attempted extermination meant the loss of entire families and communities, lands, and cultural traditions. Moreover, while some reservations, rancherias, and trust lands were later formed under federal law for Native American tribes, the broken promise of approximately 7.5 million acres of secure homelands was never adequately remedied.

There were many ways that lands were taken from tribes in California beyond those highlighted above. For example, in Southern California, the United States did not honor the provisions in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ending the Mexican American War and

1 Kimberly Johnston-Dodds, *Early California Laws and Policies Related to California Indians*, California Research Bureau, California State Library, 27-30 (2002; available at https://www.csus.edu/college/education/engagement/_internal/_documents/indian_early_california_laws_and_policies_related_to_california_indians.pdf).

2 Damon B. Akins and William J. Bauer Jr., *We Are The Land: A History of Native California*, 146 (University of California Press)(2021).

requiring the federal government to maintain Native American ownership of lands granted to them by the Mexican Government. There were additional treaties beyond the 18 mentioned above that were negotiated but never delivered to Congress for ratification. Additionally in the 1950s, the federal policy of termination was implemented to end the recognition of tribes and to transfer jurisdictional authority over tribal lands to the states. In California this was implemented through the passage of the California Rancheria Termination Act of 1958 and a subsequent 1964 amendment. This resulted in the termination of 45 reservations and rancherias in California.³ Thirty-one of the rancherias and reservations have reversed termination and are federally recognized today.⁴

The displacement of tribes from their ancestral lands also disrupted tribal stewardship and management practices that co-evolved with the lands. For example:

- The suppression and criminalization of cultural fires and tribal forestry management practices have contributed to the increase of catastrophic fires across the State.⁵
- The establishment of private property ownership often prevents basket weavers from accessing and caring for basketry materials, leading to the loss of biodiversity and diminishing historical range of California native plants.⁶
- The mass commercializing of hunting and fishing across California, unattuned to tribal ceremonial, cultural, economic, and conservation practices, disrupt ecosystem balance and led to species being at risk of or actual extinction.⁷

This stark history established a framework that, until recently, directed state agencies to resist tribal landownership, ignore tribal stewardship, undervalue Traditional Ecological Knowledge as a legitimate science, and to criminalize traditional practices. **While the legacy of these harmful policies still impacts tribal and non-tribal communities today, efforts are underway to understand and address historical wrongs in the spirit of present and future healing.**

3 Advisory Council on California Indian Policy, The ACCIP Termination Report: The Continuing Destructive Effects of the Termination Policy on California Indians (1997), available at <https://catruthandhealing.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/accip-termination-report.pdf>.

4 Karim Trueblood, et al., The California Rancheria Termination Act of 1958: The Continuous Assertion of Tribal Governments for Self-Determination, in Proceedings of The World Conference on Social Sciences, 455-54 (vol. 2, issue 1, 2023), available at <https://doi.org/10.33422/worldcss.v2i1.98>.

5 Karuk Tribe, Good Fire II Report, (March 2024), available at <https://karuktribeclimatchangeprojects.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/good-fire-ii-march-2024.pdf>; Char Miller, Burn Scars: A Documentary History of Fire Suppression, from Colonial Origins to the Resurgence of Cultural Burning (Oregon State University Press) (2024).

6 M. Kat Anderson, Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources (University of California Press) (2013).

7 For example, the history of the abalone fishery. See Les W. Field, Abalone Tales: Collaborative Explorations of Sovereignty and Identity in Native California, 150-158 (Duke University Press)(2008).

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS OF THE ROUND VALLEY INDIAN TRIBES, JOE PARKER, SIGNS A COLLABORATIVE MOU WITH CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AND REGIONAL PARTNERS TO RESTORE THE EEL RIVER.



TRIBAL, STATE, AND LOCAL LEADERS DISCUSSING OPPORTUNITIES TO COLLABORATE TO RESTORE CLEAR LAKE AND PROTECT THE CULTURALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SIGNIFICANT CHI (ALSO KNOWN AS THE CLEAR LAKE HITCH) FISH SPECIES.



THE OPPORTUNITY



Photo: Brian Baer, © California State Parks 2015

TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP AND TRIBAL KNOWLEDGE ARE VITAL TO STEWARDING CALIFORNIA'S LANDS AND WATERS AND TO CONFRONTING A RANGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES. THIS POLICY SETS THE TONE FOR AGENCY TO INSTITUTIONALIZE TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP, GUIDED BY GUBERNATORIAL AND LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS THAT MARK A NEW ERA OF TRIBAL-STATE PARTNERSHIPS.

Today, it is clear that tribal stewardship and traditional ecological practices are vital to confronting a range of environmental challenges. Repairing the relationship between tribes and the state can contribute to healing and will be crucial to responding to the changing environment. Tribal knowledge and practices are shaping state government efforts to build our collective resilience to climate change-driven threats like catastrophic wildfire, recover culturally important species like salmon, increase access to outdoors for underserved communities, prepare our coast for sea level rise, restore the health of our landscapes, reconnecting habitats, and so much more.

State agencies have an opportunity to learn from tribal leaders and communities, engage in respectful collaboration, and establish lasting tribal-state partnerships. Recent California Governors have ushered in the beginning of a new era of tribal-state partnership through executive orders and statewide policy. This Policy builds on this foundation, including:

- **Governor Jerry Brown's Executive Order B-10-11** which established the Governor Office's Tribal Advisor position and directed state agencies to communicate and consult with California Native American tribes to provide opportunities for meaningful input into the development of legislation, regulations, rules, and policies on matters that may affect tribal communities. (2011)
- **Governor Gavin Newsom's Executive Order N-15-19** apologizing to California Native American tribes for the role of the State of California in committing historical wrongs and establishing a Truth and Healing Council. (2019)
- **Governor Gavin Newsom's Statement of Administrative Policy on Native American Lands** directing all departments to identify opportunities for increased tribal access, co-management, and ancestral land return. Several departments have already returned state owned lands including California Department of Fish and Wildlife, State Lands Commission, and the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy. (2020)
- **Governor Gavin Newsom's Executive Order N-82-20** directing Agency to work with tribes in advancing the State's nature-based solutions priorities, including advancing implementation of nature-based climate solutions and conserving 30% of lands and coastal waters by 2030, known as 30x30. (2020)

The California Legislature has passed significant legislation in furtherance of this new era of tribal-state partnership, including:

- **California Government Code Section 11019.81, Assembly Bill 923 (Ramos 2022)**, encouraging "the State of California and its agencies to consult on a government-to-government basis with federally recognized tribes, and to consult with non-federally recognized tribes and tribal organizations, as appropriate, in order to allow tribal officials the opportunity to provide meaningful and timely input in the development of policies, processes, programs, and projects that have tribal implications."

- **California Civil Code Section 3333.8, Senate Bill 310 (Dodd 2024)**, authorizing the California Natural Resources Agency and local air districts to enter into agreements with federally recognized California Native American tribes for cultural burning in lieu of CAL FIRE and local air district permits.
- **California Government Code Section 6502.3 and Section 11019.82, Assembly Bill 1284 (Ramos 2024)**, encouraging the California Natural Resources Agency and its departments to enter into meaningful co-management and co-governance agreements for the management of natural resources.
- **California Government Code Sections 8899.90 - 8899.95, Assembly Bill 2022 (Ramos 2022)**, prohibiting the use of an offensive and derogatory term towards Native American women on places and features across California and directing the California Advisory Committee for Geographic Names to develop a process to identify and change offensive and derogatory names in California.
- **California Public Resources Code Sections 71450 - 71452, Senate Bill 1402 (Min 2024)** adopting the goal to conserve 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030 and the ten pathways to accomplish this goal, including "[s]upporting tribal engagement and leadership in implementing the 30x30 goal."
- **California Health and Safety Code Section 38561.5, Assembly Bill 1757 (Garcia 2022)**, requiring the State to develop nature-based solutions climate targets that contribute to California's goals of achieving carbon neutrality and protecting Californians from the climate crisis. This law also requires reporting a summary of the benefits to low-income communities, disadvantaged communities, vulnerable communities, disadvantaged farmers, and Native American tribes.
- **California Public Resources Code Section 71450, Assembly Bill 2278 (Kalra 2022)**, requires Agency to prioritize specific actions to achieve the 30x30 goal, including by supporting tribal engagement and leadership in implementing the goal.
- **California Public Resources Code Section 71453, Assembly Bill 900 (Papan 2025)**, adds to existing law requiring the Secretary of Natural Resources Agency to prepare and submit an annual report to the Legislature on progress made toward achieving the 30x30 goal. This law requires the Agency to prepare a section on stewardship as part of the 2027 annual report that includes recommendations to reduce barriers and increase and improve stewardship of 30x30 lands in collaboration with stakeholders, California Native American tribes, and relevant state agencies. Specifically, to provide recommendations for increasing ancestral land return and advancing tribal stewardship in protecting conserved lands.

As part of this new era of tribal-state relations, the Newsom Administration and California Legislature have provided unprecedented funding to advance tribal stewardship, including the:

- Establishment and initial funding of \$100 million for the **Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Grant Program** to support approximately 49,000 acres of land to be returned to California Native American tribes.
- Establishment and initial funding of \$29 million for the **Tribal Wildfire and Forest Resiliency Grant Program** and has already supported 15 tribes' wildfire resilience and forestry management priorities.
- Establishment and initial funding of \$10 million for the **Tribal Youth Conservation Corps Grant Program**, creating five new programs and providing job training opportunities for tribal youth.
- Passage of the **\$10 billion Climate Bond** that provides for \$75 million in tribal set asides and the voter mandate of 40% of the bond funding to deliver meaningful and direct benefits to vulnerable populations, disadvantaged communities, and severely disadvantaged communities, including California Native American tribes. For specific programs in the Climate Bond, this funding can include support capacity, planning, and design implementation, as well as direct implementation projects.
- Many grant programs under Agency have awarded funding to support tribal stewardship priorities, including ancestral land return. These include, but are not limited to, programs administered by the Wildlife Conservation Board, State Coastal Conservancy, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy, Department of Conservation, and Ocean Protection Council.

The California Natural Resources Agency has built up its internal capacity to ensure it can meet the opportunities in the new era of tribal-state relations, including:

- The establishment and appointment of the **first ever California Natural Resources Agency Deputy Secretary for Tribal Affairs**. This position is tasked with the development and implementation of Agency's tribal affairs policies and to provide resources and support to the tribal liaisons for the 27 departments, commissions, and conservancies under the Agency umbrella.
- The Agency **created the California Natural Resources Agency's Tribal Affairs Unit** to have a full team of tribal affairs professional working towards strengthening partnerships with California Native American tribes. This team currently includes the Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs, Tribal Funding Program Manager, Manager of Geographic Names, two Grant Administrators, and a fellowship program for new graduates to gain hands on tribal affairs experiences to support their future careers.

- The creation of full-time **executive level tribal affairs positions** at the Department of Water Resources, Department of Conservation, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, California Energy Commission, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Parks and Recreation, and Sierra Nevada Conservancy. Many of these departments have developed tribal affairs programs and policies to support their work in strengthening partnerships with tribes.
- The Agency updated its **Tribal Consultation Policy to institutionalize early, often, and meaningful tribal consultations** throughout the work of the Agency. To support the implementation of the Tribal Consultation Policy and other tribal affairs policies, Agency hosts monthly tribal liaison calls to improve coordination between departments, an annual in-depth tribal liaison training to provide resources to tribal affairs professionals, and an annual tribal affairs 101 training for all CNRA employees to build a strong baseline understanding of tribal affairs.
- The Agency developed a **Tribal Grant Administration Guidance document** to provide additional resources and support to grant programs funding tribal priorities. This guidance works to reduce barriers tribes face in accessing state funding and is a tool to train grant programs on how to work with tribes.

State leaders have set forth a vision for a new era of tribal-state partnerships rooted in an acknowledgement of historic wrongs and progressing in the spirit of truth and healing. Agency has the directive to collaborate with the original stewards of these lands and waters as we confront modern environmental challenges by advancing meaningful and durable tribal access, collaboration, and ancestral land return across the state. **Agency and its departments must operationalize these directives by utilizing existing laws, regulations, investments, and policy to build durable partnerships with tribes, characterized by respectful collaboration and a whole-of-government approach, and advance tribal access, collaboration, and ancestral land return across the State.**



CHAIRMAN SERRELL SMOKEY, OF THE WASHOE TRIBE OF NEVADA AND CALIFORNIA, SURVEYS 10,000 ACRES RETURNED TO THE TRIBE IN 2026. READ MORE ON P. 27. PHOTO COURTESY OF FEATHER RIVER LAND TRUST.

THE OPPORTUNITY IN ACTION

TOLOWA DEE-NI' NATION TRAINS FUTURE STEWARDS

WHO: TOLOWA DEE-NI' NATION
WHAT: TRIBAL YOUTH FROM THE TOLOWA DEE-NI' NATION GAIN HANDS-ON EQUIPMENT TRAINING FROM EXPERTS FROM THEIR COMMUNITY. THE NATION'S CONSERVATION CORPS PROGRAM IS FUNDED FROM THE CALIFORNIA CONSERVATION CORPS' TRIBAL YOUTH NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS CONSERVATION CORPS GRANT PROGRAM.

PARTNERS: TOLOWA DEE-NI' NATION AND CALIFORNIA CONSERVATION CORPS.



Photo courtesy of California Conservation Corps



Photo by Condor Visual Media

LA JOLLA BAND OF LUISEÑO INDIANS ADVANCES WILDFIRE MITIGATION AND REFORESTATION

WHO: LA JOLLA BAND OF LUISEÑO INDIANS

WHAT: THE LA JOLLA BAND OF LUISEÑO INDIANS IS ADVANCING WILDFIRE MITIGATION AND REFORESTATION ACROSS THEIR ANCESTRAL LANDS THROUGH FOREST RESTORATION,

STRATEGIC FUEL BREAK CONSTRUCTION, AND EFFORTS TO ADDRESS INVASIVE SPECIES. TRIBAL WORKFORCE TRAININGS AND WILDFIRE MITIGATION AND REFORESTATION PROJECTS ARE SUPPORTED BY CAL FIRE'S TRIBAL WILDFIRE RESILIENCE GRANT PROGRAM.

PARTNERS: LA JOLLA BAND OF LUISEÑO INDIANS AND CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION.



TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP POLICY



Members of the Pit River Tribe at McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park ahead of an MOU signing in 2024. Photo: Brian Baer, © California State Parks 2024

THE TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP POLICY SETS THE GOAL OF EXPANDING TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP OF AT LEAST 7.5 MILLION ACRES OF CALIFORNIA LAND AND COASTAL WATERS AND ESTABLISHES STANDARD PRACTICES TO ADVANCE MEANINGFUL AND DURABLE TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP THROUGH THREE PATHWAYS: (1) ANCESTRAL LAND RETURN, (2) COLLABORATION, AND (3) ACCESS.

In partnership with California Native American tribes, and with the understanding that all of California was once tribal land, Agency and its departments, utilizing their existing authorities under California law and funding programs, will work to expand opportunities for tribal stewardship across the state.

Tribal stewardship is defined by each individual tribe through tribal constitutions, laws, resolution, programming priorities, cultural and religious practices, ceremonies, or other measures. Tribal stewardship can include actions to care for and manage specific areas of land, landscapes or watersheds, plant and animal communities, and natural resources for cultural and ecological objectives. While tribal stewardship may include stewardship over tribal trust and fee lands, it does not need to be limited and can include other public, federal, and private lands across California.

This Policy establishes the long-term goal to expand tribal stewardship of at least 7.5 million acres of land and coastal waters within California through the creation of meaningful and durable tribal access and collaborative agreements and the return of ancestral lands to tribal ownership. Advancing stewardship of at least 7.5 million acres of land and coastal waters by California Native American tribes is an important step in repairing the harms caused by the state's actions to oppose the ratification of the 18 treaties. While this is an important step, more work is needed to heal from historical wrongs.

To accomplish this Policy and in a manner that meets statutory goals and responsibilities, Agency and its departments will actively pursue partnerships with California Native American tribes, the federal government, local governments, non-profit organizations, conservancies, land trusts, colleges and universities, philanthropy, other states, and private landowners. Agency and its departments will work collaboratively with tribes to identify opportunities to advance mutually beneficial priorities and the stewardship goals of partnering tribes. A key step to begin collaborative work with tribes is early, often, and meaningful consultation and engagement to strengthen relationships between tribal and non-tribal entities.

This Policy identifies three key pathways which may be used to advance meaningful and durable tribal stewardship: **(1) Ancestral Land Return, (2) Collaboration, and (3) Access.** The range of methods and pathways are detailed below and are accompanied by a Toolkit to support the implementation of this Policy.

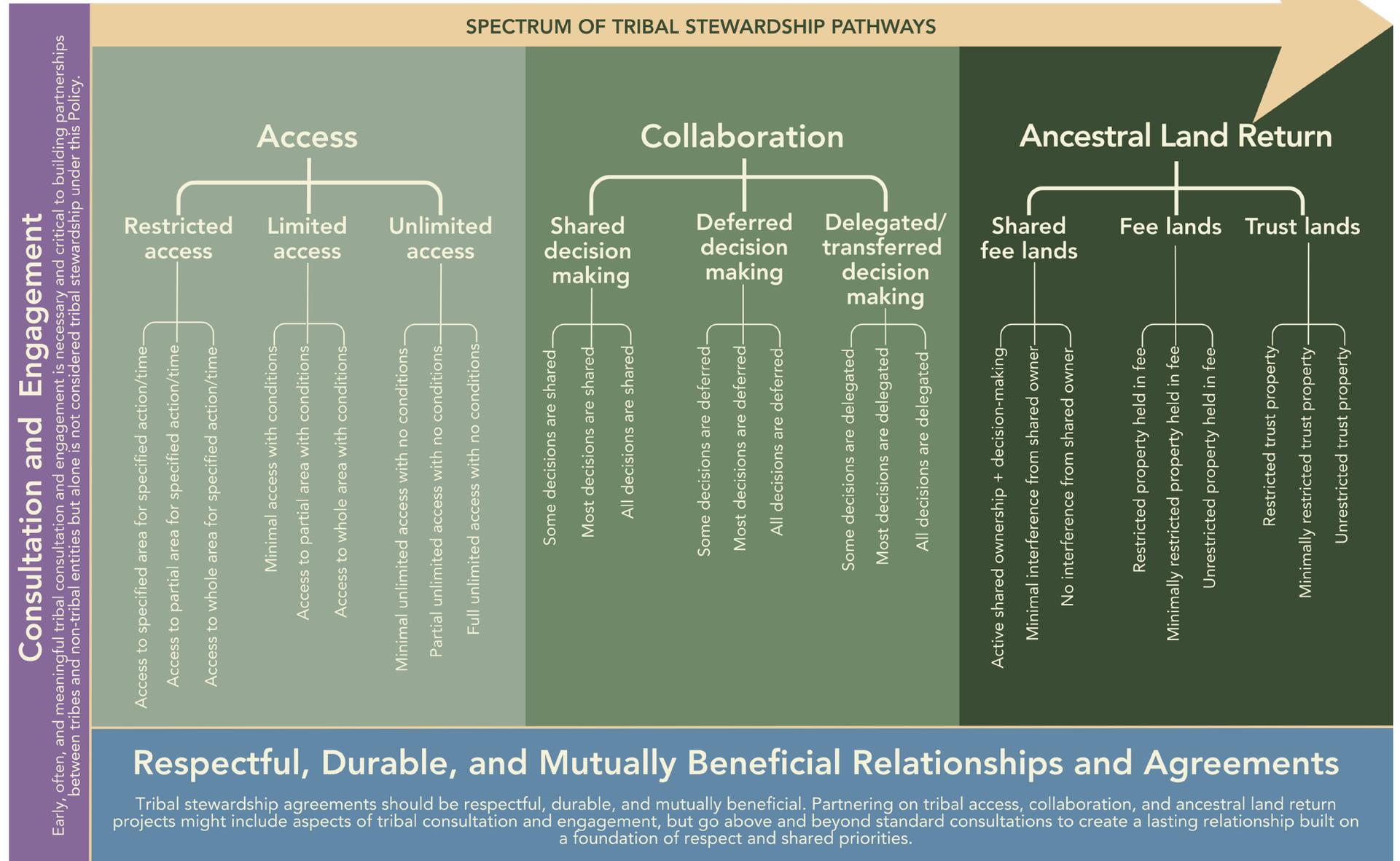
Agency and tribes shall work collaboratively to identify efforts that achieve the objectives of this Policy and to report these efforts to CNRA Deputy Secretary for Tribal Affairs. Agency shall prepare an annual report on the implementation of this Policy and review the language of this Policy, in consultation with tribes, **every five years** to ensure regular adjustments are made as tribal-state relationships develop and strengthen.

FIGURE 1. SPECTRUM OF TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP PATHWAYS

The Tribal Stewardship Policy sets a goal to advance tribal stewardship of at least 7.5 million acres of lands and coastal waters in California.

There are three types of tribal stewardship: (1) Ancestral Land Return, (2) Collaboration, and (3) Access.

Each relationship pursuant to this Policy shall be respectful, mutually beneficial, meaningful, and durable.



LEADERS FROM AGUA CALIENTE BAND OF MISSION INDIANS, CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY, AND THE COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY CELEBRATE ANCESTRAL LAND RETURN IN 2024.



TRIBAL AND STATE LEADERS CELEBRATING THE CREATION OF TWO TRIBALLY LED NATIONAL MONUMENTS—SÁTTÍTLA HIGHLANDS NATIONAL MONUMENT AND CHUCKWALLA NATIONAL MONUMENT.





Photo courtesy of Wildlife Conservation Board

STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

TRIBAL CONSULTATION

Engaging in **early, often, and meaningful consultations** with California Native American tribes is essential for Agency and its departments to ensure tribes are collaborative partners and tribal priorities are integrated into the work of Agency and its departments. Agency's Tribal Consultation Policy provides additional information on early, often, and meaningful tribal consultation and a detailed best practices guide to support state staff engaging in tribal consultation. The Tribal Consultation Policy should be followed when carrying out work related to this Policy as it would be with any other Agency action.

When in the process of pursuing ancestral land return or entering into tribal access and collaborative agreements in shared ancestral territories, it is critical for non-tribal entities, including state staff and partners, to understand inter-tribal dynamics and engage in early tribal consultations before entering into agreements for collaboration or access, or returning ancestral lands. Consensus between multiple tribes should be a stated goal when pursuing partnerships in shared ancestral territories but is not required.

Deference should be provided to tribes in the determination of a particular tribe's ancestral land boundaries, while also meeting the definition of ancestral land as detailed in Appendix 1 and established by federal and state laws. If there is a dispute or conflict between tribes on the boundaries of ancestral territories, non-tribal entities may consult with the tribes in the dispute and other neighboring tribes. In this process, and with the consent of the consulting and relevant tribes, inter-tribal working groups may provide a venue to discuss the conflict with the goal of finding a solution. Additionally, non-tribal entities should work closely with tribal affairs professionals and attorneys with federal Indian law expertise to conduct research of the history in the region and relevant treaties, laws, policies, and executive orders. If a solution or resolution to the dispute is not available, state staff will, and others are encouraged to, strive to develop a compromise that preserves future opportunities for tribal stewardship for all interested tribes.

Agency and its departments have a unique government-to-government relationship with federally recognized tribes. In this, Agency fully acknowledges federally recognized tribes as sovereign nations with self-determination to pursue conservation and economic opportunities and the authority to regulate their members and cultural practices. This Policy cannot nor is it intended to undermine existing tribal law, authority, or jurisdiction, and deference should be provided to federally recognized tribes on exercising their sovereignty over tribal lands and their members. Coordination between tribal and state jurisdictions and laws is an opportunity to share resources and support mutual goals in the management and care of California lands and waters.



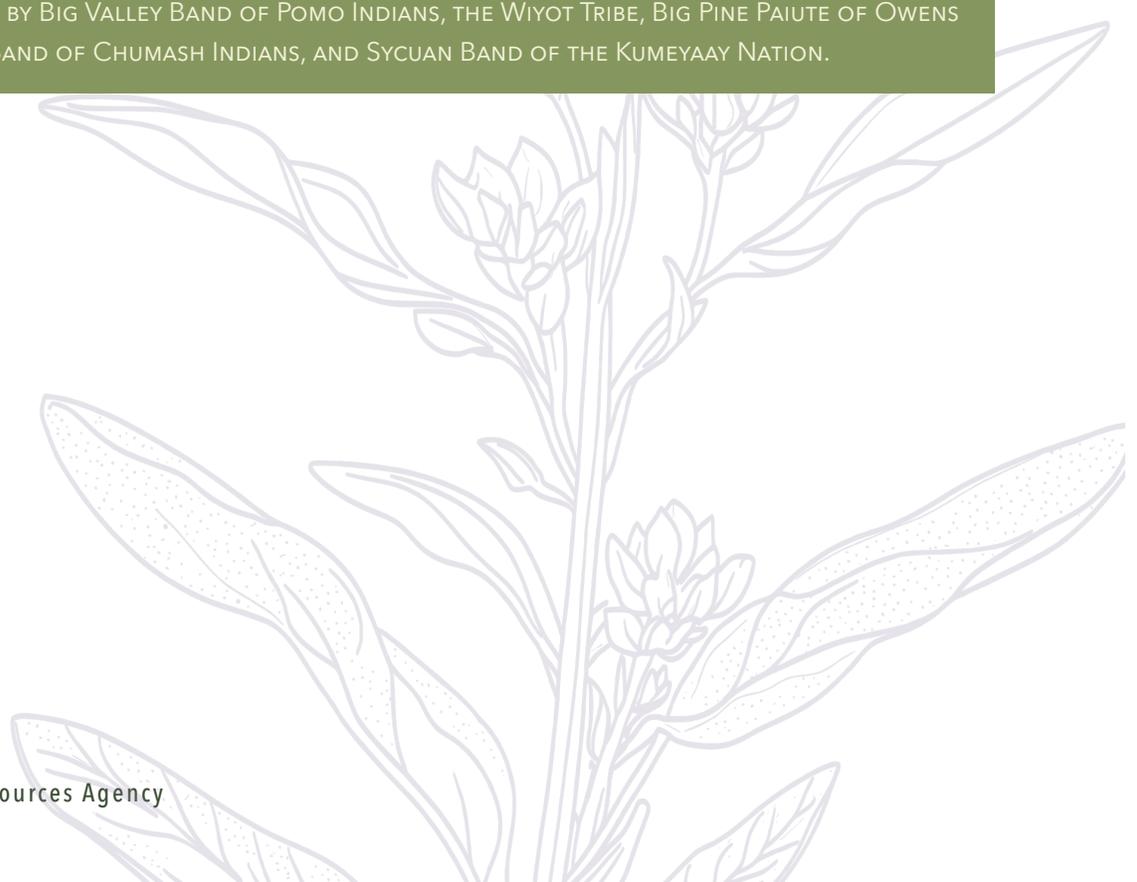
EARLY, OFTEN, AND MEANINGFUL TRIBAL CONSULTATIONS CREATING THE TRIBAL NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS GRANT PROGRAM

WHO: THE CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY

WHAT: AS PART OF THE INITIATIVE TO CONSERVE 30% OF CALIFORNIA LANDS AND

COASTAL WATERS BY 2030, THE CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY WAS APPROPRIATED \$100 MILLION FROM THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE TO CREATE A FIRST OF ITS KIND GRANT PROGRAM TO FUND ANCESTRAL LAND RETURN AND TRIBALLY LED NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS PROJECTS. THE CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY CONSULTED AND MET WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM OVER 45 DIFFERENT CALIFORNIA NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES ON THE DRAFT GRANT GUIDELINES THROUGH ONE-ON-ONE CONSULTATIONS AND AT REGIONAL IN-PERSON ROUNDTABLES HOSTED BY BIG VALLEY BAND OF POMO INDIANS, THE WIYOT TRIBE, BIG PINE PAIUTE OF OWENS VALLEY, SANTA YNEZ BAND OF CHUMASH INDIANS, AND SYCUAN BAND OF THE KUMEYAAY NATION.

CONSULTATION IN ACTION





STEWARDSHIP PATHWAY #1

ANCESTRAL LAND RETURN

ANCESTRAL LAND RETURN is return or re-acquisition of property or property rights, and can include ownership of land, water, air, and mineral rights to a California Native American tribe within the tribe's ancestral territory. For durable and meaningful ancestral land return, acquisition by the tribe must include one of the following:

- Legally binding and enforceable property or other rights recorded on title of a specific parcel of land.
- Legally binding and enforceable property right to water. This may be recorded on title of a specific parcel of land or be committed to through a contract or other legally binding agreement.
- A specific parcel of land held in trust by the federal government for the benefit of a federally recognized tribe, which may include the transfer of federal lands from a federal agency into federal trust for the benefit of a federally recognized tribe as a form of ancestral land return.
- Specific adjudicated water rights held in trust by the federal government for the benefit of a federally recognized tribe.



Ancestral land return is the most robust form of tribal stewardship and is the stewardship pathway most closely aligned with the land status of the approximately 7.5 million acres of land promised in treaties to tribes. In tribal consultations for this Policy, California Native American tribes have consistently and clearly communicated that the return of land with no encumbrances is the strongest and most respectful form of ancestral land return. Where possible under the law, it is the direction of this Policy to avoid new and eliminate existing encumbrances on lands returned to tribes and to support tribes placing land into trust. Due to varying legal authority and requirements on public funding and the California Public Trust Doctrine, some ancestral land return projects pursued with state funding and authorities may require some conditions including deed restrictions, limitations of uses, contract obligations, limited waivers of sovereign immunity, or public access on the property. Agency and its departments will clearly communicate early in the process to tribes the legal requirements associated with

specific ancestral land return projects. Agency and its departments will identify opportunities for flexibility and deference to California Native American tribes, while also upholding the requirements placed on state agencies under California law and policy.





Photo by Elizabeth Carmel, courtesy of Wildlife Conservation Board

WASHOE TRIBE PURCHASES OVER 10,000 ACRES

WHO: WAŠÍ-ŠIW LAND TRUST, A TRIBAL LAND TRUST FORMED BY THE WASHOE TRIBE OF NEVADA AND CALIFORNIA

WHAT: THE LAND TRUST PURCHASED LOYALTON RANCH WHICH THEY HAVE RENAMED THE WÉLMELTI? PRESERVE, A PROPERTY OVER 10,000 ACRES, FROM THE CITY OF SANTA CLARA IN FEBRUARY 2026 FOR \$6 MILLION. THE WASHOE PEOPLE WERE FORCIBLY DISPLACED FROM THEIR ANCESTRAL HOMELANDS, INCLUDING WHAT BECAME LOYALTON RANCH, DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF

CALIFORNIA STATEHOOD. THE LAND IS IMPORTANT HABITAT FOR PRONGHORN ANTELOPE, MOUNTAIN LIONS, WOLVES, PINYON PINES, AND ASPENS. THE TRIBE PLANS TO MAINTAIN THE LAND AS OPEN SPACE, RESTORING NATIVE VEGETATION, AND USING THE SPACE FOR CULTURAL WORK.

HOW: THE WAŠÍ-ŠIW LAND TRUST WORKED WITH THE NORTHERN SIERRA PARTNERSHIP AND THE FEATHER RIVER LAND TRUST TO FUNDRAISE FOR THE PURCHASE OF THIS PROPERTY. FUNDING WAS PROVIDED THROUGH A \$5.5 MILLION GRANT FROM THE CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD. THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD AND FEATHER RIVER LAND TRUST STAFF COMPLETED THE DUE DILIGENCE WORK NECESSARY FOR THE LAND TRUST TO HOLD TITLE.

PARTNERS: CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD, NORTHERN SIERRA PARTNERSHIP, AND FEATHER RIVER LAND TRUST.



Photo courtesy of California Coastal Commission

INTER-TRIBAL NON-PROFIT ACQUIRES ANCESTRAL LANDS ON COAST THROUGH LEGISLATION AND NO-COST TRANSFER

WHO: SHERWOOD VALLEY POMO BAND OF INDIANS, ROUND VALLEY INDIAN TRIBES, AND THE COYOTE VALLEY BAND OF POMO INDIANS

WHAT: BLUES BEACH, IN THE ANCESTRAL TERRITORY OF THE SHERWOOD VALLEY POMO BAND OF INDIANS, ROUND VALLEY INDIAN TRIBES, AND THE COYOTE VALLEY BAND OF POMO INDIANS, WAS RETURNED TO THE TRIBES IN 2021. BLUES BEACH WILL BE OWNED AND STEWARDED

BY ALL THREE TRIBES THROUGH AN INTERTRIBAL NONPROFIT, KAI POMA, WHICH IS INCORPORATED UNDER HOOPA VALLEY TRIBAL LAW AND WILL PROTECT THE LANDS AND MAINTAIN PUBLIC ACCESS.

HOW: BLUES BEACH WAS TRANSFERRED FROM CALTRANS TO KAI POMA VIA SENATE BILL 231 (MCGUIRE 2021), SIGNED INTO LAW BY GOVERNOR NEWSOM ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2021. THE LEGISLATION AUTHORIZED CALTRANS TO TRANSFER THE LAND AT NO COST TO THE TRIBAL NONPROFIT.

PARTNERS: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, CALIFORNIA COASTAL CONSERVANCY.

ANCESTRAL LAND RETURN IN ACTION

HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE PURCHASES HUPA MOUNTAIN

WHO: HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE

WHAT: THE HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE PURCHASED A 10,395-ACRE PROPERTY IN HUPA MOUNTAIN, PART OF THE TRIBE'S ANCESTRAL HOMELANDS, FROM THE FOREST MANAGEMENT COMPANY NEW FORESTS IN 2023. THE LAND BORDERS THE WESTERN BOUNDARY OF THE TRIBE'S RESERVATION. THE TRIBE PLANS TO RESTORE HEALTHY FORESTS, INCREASE ACCESS TO TRIBAL MEMBERS, CREATE JOBS AND RESTORATION ECONOMY FOR THE TRIBE, RESTORE SALMON RUNS AND ELK POPULATIONS, AND MAINTAIN THE CARBON CREDITS COMMITMENTS ON THE PROPERTY.

HOW: THE TRIBE WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE CONSERVATION FUND TO FUNDRAISE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DOLLARS FOR THE PURCHASE OF THE PROPERTY. THIS INCLUDED PHILANTHROPIC FUNDERS, THE CALIFORNIA STATE COASTAL CONSERVANCY, AND THE CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY'S TRIBAL NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS GRANT PROGRAM.

PARTNERS: THE CONSERVATION FUND, CALIFORNIA STATE COASTAL CONSERVANCY, CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY, AND PHILANTHROPY.



Photo courtesy of Hoopa Valley Tribe



Photo courtesy of Wildlife Conservation Board

TULE RIVER TRIBE PURCHASES YOWLUMNE HILLS

WHO: TULE RIVER TRIBE

WHAT: THE TULE RIVER TRIBE RECLAIMED OVER 17,000 ACRES OF THEIR ANCESTRAL HOMELANDS IN THE YOWLUMNE HILLS, PURCHASING TWO PROPERTIES, FORMERLY KNOWN AS HERSHEY RANCH AND CAROTHERS RANCH, ADJACENT TO THE TULE RIVER RESERVATION. THE TRIBE WAS FORCIBLY REMOVED FROM THE YOWLUMNE HILLS AFTER SIGNING A 1851 TREATY

WHICH WAS NEVER RATIFIED. THE TRIBE PLANS TO RECONNECT THE TWO PROPERTIES WITH THE RESERVATION TO BUILD WILDLIFE CORRIDORS FOR WILDLIFE AND NATIVE PLANTS.

HOW: THE TRIBE WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE LANDOWNERS TO PURCHASE BOTH THE HERSHEY RANCH AND THE NEIGHBORING CAROTHERS RANCH TO ACCOMPLISH THE TRIBE'S HABITAT CONNECTIVITY AND RESTORATION GOALS. TO ACT QUICKLY, THE CONSERVATION FUND PROVIDE INTERIM ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT WHILE THE TRIBE WORKED WITH PHILANTHROPY, THE CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY'S TRIBAL NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS GRANT PROGRAM, AND THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD FOR FUNDING OF THE ACQUISITION.

PARTNERS: CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY, THE CONSERVATION FUND, CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD, CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY'S TRIBAL NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS GRANT PROGRAM.



Fire practitioners at an intertribal beneficial fire training led by the Berry Creek Rancheria of Tyme Maidu Indians in 2025. Photo courtesy of CAL FIRE

STEWARDSHIP PATHWAY #2

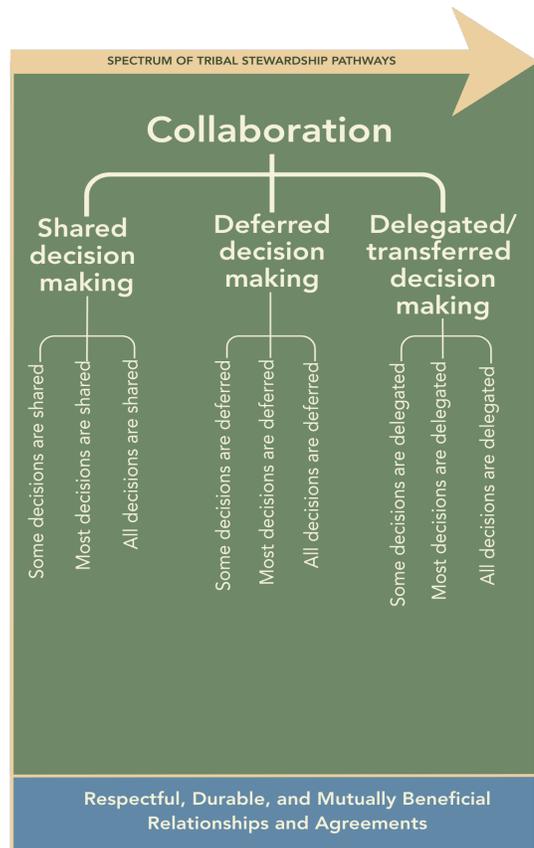
COLLABORATION

COLLABORATION describes the act of building a relationship between one or more California Native American tribe(s) and one or more non-tribal entities for the stewardship of a defined area, infrastructure, project, species, or natural resource. These relationships are built on respect, a desire to pursue shared goals that are mutually beneficial to all parties, and rely on inter-personal connections and relationships. Developing collaborative relationships and agreements may require time to build trust and should respect tribal timelines and decision-making processes.

Generally, most collaborative relationships center around decision-making of the shared priority or goal for the stewardship of a defined area, infrastructure, project, species, or natural resource. The parties of the collaborative relationship should discuss if the decision-making is **(1) a shared decision-making process; (2) a party is deferring to the other in decision-making; or (3) a party is transferring or delegating the decision-making to the other party.** The type of decision-making will depend on the shared priority or goal as well as each party's legal authority to share, defer, or transfer/delegate decision-making to another party.

Collaborative Agreements are written agreements entered into between one or more California Native American tribe(s) and one or more non-tribal entity(ies) for a defined area within the tribes' ancestral territory that sets forth the terms of mutually beneficial collaboration for the stewardship of a specific area, infrastructure, project, species, or natural resource. Written agreements should contemplate the priorities, goals, and legal authorities of each party to (1) share; (2) defer; and/or (3) transfer/delegate decision-making between the parties of the agreement.

Collaborative agreements can take many forms including memoranda of understanding, memoranda of agreements, cultural and/or conservation easements, joint powers agreements, and joint powers authorities. Collaborative agreements with federally recognized tribes can take the form of co-management and co-governance agreements. Additional tools to support collaborative agreements can include legislation, contracts, grants, leases, easements, and other written agreements. Collaboration agreements could also be used to define tribal collaboration in the planning, design, and implementation phases of a non-tribally led project, provided the durability and mutual benefit stipulations defined in this Policy are met.



In the private or non-profit context, collaborative agreements are often relationship-based and can be memorialized through memoranda of understanding, charters and bylaws, contracts, easements, and other written agreements. Some non-profits provide seats on their board for tribal leadership to help guide the priorities of the non-profit and build interconnection between the organization and a collaborative tribe.

In the federal context, collaborative agreements are often characterized as co-stewardship agreements, a term which broadly refers to collaborative or cooperative arrangements between federal departments, bureaus, and offices and tribes related to shared interests in managing, conserving, and preserving federal lands and waters. The federal government enters into co-stewardship agreements with both federally recognized tribes and non-federally recognized tribes. Additionally, under certain provisions of federal law, the federal government can enter into contracts or compacts with federally recognized tribes, which in turn allow tribes to lead and implement services that the federal government would traditionally perform.¹

¹ For example, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (Public Law-638) and the Tribal Forest Protection Act (Public Law 108-278) provide opportunities for tribal stewardship in federal lands.

In the state context, collaborative agreements can take many forms but often utilize memoranda of understanding to articulate the relationship between the state agency and a tribe. Additionally, under Assembly Bill 1284 (Ramos 2024), Agency and its departments can enter into co-governance and co-management agreements with federally recognized tribes. Under this Act, Agency is required to begin negotiations of these agreements within 90 days of a request by a tribe as feasible within existing staffing and budget. These legislatively defined relationships are:

- **Co-Governance**, as defined by California Government Code 11019.82 (b) (2), is governance that emphasizes collaboration and shared decision making on a government-to-government level. Co-governance occurs between a federally recognized tribe and a public agency for the shared responsibilities and authorities for governing ancestral lands. These relationships acknowledge tribes' inherent right of jurisdictional and regulatory authority over their tribal members and cultural practices.
- **Co-Management** is a specific relationship between a federally recognized tribe and other sovereign governments. As defined by California Government Code 11019.82 (b) (3), co-management "means a collaborative effort established through an agreement in which two or more sovereigns mutually negotiate, define, and allocate amongst themselves the sharing of management functions and responsibilities for a given territory, area, or set of natural resources."

Some critical components to meaningful co-governance and co-management relationships include, but are not limited to, recognition of federally recognized tribes as sovereign nations, legitimate communication and governance structures for tribes to be fully involved and active participants in early management decisions, recognition and incorporation of tribal expertise throughout the decision and management process, accountability between all parties of the relationship, and clear dispute resolution processes.

Developing collaboration agreements may require time to build trust and should respect tribal timelines and resources.



Photo via California Department of Fish and Wildlife

BISHOP PAIUTE TRIBE, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE, AND THE LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND POWER PARTNER TO REINTRODUCE THE ENDANGERED OWENS PUFFISH INTO THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED OWENS PUFFISH REFUGE WITHIN THE TRIBE'S CONSERVATION OPEN SPACE AREA.

THE SPECTRUM OF COLLABORATION | SHARED DECISION MAKING

ALL PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT MEET REGULARLY AND DISCUSS KEY DECISIONS. EACH PARTY RELIES ON THEIR LEGAL AUTHORITY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STEWARDSHIP DECISIONS.

EXAMPLE #1: A COLLABORATIVE MOU WHERE PARTIES DISCUSS THE ISSUE OF POLLUTANTS ENTERING A BODY OF WATER AND REACH A SHARED DECISION OUTLINED IN AN AGREEMENT AND EACH PARTY USES THEIR OWN RESOURCES AND LEGAL AUTHORITY TO IMPLEMENT THE SHARED GOAL OF REDUCING POLLUTION IN THE WATER.

EXAMPLE #2: A COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED THROUGH A CO-GOVERNANCE AGREEMENT DISCUSSES SHARED PRIORITIES ON A REGULAR BASIS INCLUDING WHICH PROJECTS TO FUND. EACH PARTY USES THEIR OWN AUTHORITY TO IMPLEMENT PROJECTS, WITH SOME PARTIES PROVIDING THE FUNDING AND OTHERS COMPLETING THE WORK.

TRIBAL CO-STEWARDSHIP OF THE CHUMASH HERITAGE NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

WHO: CHUMASH HERITAGE NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY INTERGOVERNMENTAL POLICY COUNCIL AND INDIGENOUS COLLABORATIVE CO-STEWARDSHIP FRAMEWORK

WHAT: THE 4,543 SQUARE MILE CHUMASH HERITAGE NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY WAS OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED ON NOVEMBER 30, 2024, ALONG 116 MILES OF CALIFORNIA COASTLINE. THROUGH THIS DESIGNATION, THE SANCTUARY WILL BE CO-STEWARDED BY SANTA YNEZ BAND OF CHUMASH INDIANS, NOAA, AND THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA THROUGH THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL POLICY COUNCIL. AN INDIGENOUS CULTURES ADVISORY PANEL WILL SUPPORT SANCTUARY PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER INDIGENOUS GROUPS WITH AN ANCESTRAL CONNECTION TO THE AREA.

HOW: THE SANCTUARY INCLUDES A NUMBER OF COLLABORATIVE AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS TO SHARE RESOURCES, EXPERTISE, TO ADVANCE SHARED PRIORITIES, AND TO INCLUDE INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN SANCTUARY MANAGEMENT THROUGH A MULTI LAYERED INDIGENOUS COLLABORATIVE CO-STEWARDSHIP FRAMEWORK.

PARTNERS: SANTA YNEZ BAND OF CHUMASH INDIANS, NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION, CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL, AND 18 VOTING MEMBERS AND 15 ALTERNATES THAT REPRESENT INDIGENOUS CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE, THE GENERAL PUBLIC, TOURISM AND RECREATION, BUSINESS, RECREATIONAL FISHING, COMMERCIAL FISHING, EDUCATION, RESEARCH, CONSERVATION, OCEAN ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS, AND PORTS, HARBORS AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES, INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENT, THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT.



Photo by Geneva E.B. Thompson

COLLABORATION IN ACTION

SHARED

DEFERRED

DELEGATED

THE SPECTRUM OF COLLABORATION | DEFERRED DECISION MAKING

THE PARTIES HAVE A SHARED GOAL OR PRIORITY, BUT ONE PARTY IS DEFERRING TO THE OTHER PARTY TO MAKE DECISIONS AND IMPLEMENT ACTIONS.

EXAMPLE #1: A CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT WHERE ALL PARTIES AGREE THAT REDUCING POLLUTION IN A BODY OF WATER IS A SHARED PRIORITY, BUT ONE PARTY DEFERS TO THE OTHER PARTY ON HOW TO PREVENT POLLUTION FROM ENTERING THE WATER, RELYING ON THE SECOND PARTY'S LEGAL AUTHORITY AND RESOURCES. THIS MAY INCLUDE ONE PARTY PROVIDING FUNDING TO ANOTHER PARTY AND THEN DEFERRING TO THE SECOND PARTY FOR THE DECISION-MAKING ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE POLLUTION PREVENTION PROJECT UNDER THE SECOND PARTY'S LEGAL AUTHORITY.

EXAMPLE #2: CNRA AND A TRIBE IMPLEMENT A CULTURAL BURN AGREEMENT. CNRA AND A TRIBE DISCUSS THE PRIORITY OF ADVANCING CULTURAL FIRE WITH OPEN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE PARTIES. CNRA DEFERS TO THE TRIBE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT, RELYING ON TRIBAL LAW, REGULATORY AUTHORITY OVER MEMBERS, AND RESOURCES TO COMPLETE THE CULTURAL BURNS.



Photo courtesy of Karuk Tribe

KARUK TRIBE ENTERS INTO COLLABORATIVE AGREEMENT WITH THE CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY IN LIEU OF CALFIRE PERMITS FOR CULTURAL BURNING.

WHO: KARUK TRIBE

WHAT: IN 2025, THE KARUK TRIBE ENTERED INTO A GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT WITH THE CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY FOR PURPOSES

OF CULTURAL BURNING IN LIEU OF CALFIRE PERMITS. THIS COLLABORATIVE AGREEMENT ACKNOWLEDGES THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE KARUK TRIBE TO CONDUCT CULTURAL BURNS UNDER KARUK LAW, HONOR TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE, CONTRIBUTE TO WILDFIRE RESILIENCE THROUGH ADVANCING BENEFICIAL FIRE IN FORESTRY MANAGEMENT, AND ALIGN WITH CALIFORNIA'S BROADER CLIMATE GOALS.

How: THE KARUK TRIBE SPONSORED SENATE BILL 310 (DODD 2024) TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE LAWS AND FRAMEWORKS FOR HONORING TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY AND CULTURAL BURNING. AFTER THE PASSAGE OF THE NEW LAW, THE TRIBE, CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY, AND CALFIRE WORKED COLLABORATIVELY TO DEVELOP THE FIRST EVER AGREEMENT, TEMPLATE FOR OTHER TRIBES TO UTILIZE, AND ADDITIONAL MATERIALS.

COLLABORATION IN ACTION

SHARED **DEFERRED** DELEGATED

THE SPECTRUM OF COLLABORATION | DELEGATED OR TRANSFERRED DECISION MAKING

THE PARTIES HAVE A SHARED GOAL OR PRIORITY, BUT ONE PARTY IS TRANSFERRING OR DELEGATING ITS LEGAL AUTHORITY AND/OR RESOURCES TO THE SECOND PARTY FOR DECISION-MAKING PURPOSES. THIS DELEGATION DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ABSOLUTE OR UNCHANGING.

EXAMPLE #1: THE TRIBE AND STATE DEPARTMENT HAVE THE SHARED GOAL OF MANAGING A PARTICULAR AREA TO HONOR AND RESPECT THE TRIBE'S CULTURE. THE STATE DEPARTMENT, THROUGH A JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT (JPA), HAS DELEGATED/TRANSFERRED SOME OF ITS AUTHORITY TO THE TRIBE TO MAKE DECISIONS OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE AREA WITHIN THE PARAMETERS DETAILED IN THE JPA.

EXAMPLE #2: A FEDERAL AGENCY TRANSFERS AUTHORITY TO A TRIBE TO IMPLEMENT A PROGRAM, FUNCTION, SERVICE, OR ACTIVITY THROUGH AN INDIAN SELF-DETERMINATION AND EDUCATION ASSISTANCE ACT PUBLIC LAW-638 CONTRACT OR COMPACT.

COLLABORATION IN ACTION

YUOK TRIBE ENTERS INTO JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY AGREEMENT WITH STATE PARKS TO OPERATE CHAH-PEKW O' KET'-TOH VISITOR CENTER

WHO: YUOK TRIBE AND CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

WHAT: THE YUOK TRIBE SIGNED A JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY AGREEMENT WITH CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS TO OPERATE THE STONE LAGOON VISITOR CENTER IN 2020. THE TRIBE REOPENED THE RENOVATED AND RENAMED CHAH-PEKW O' KET'-TOH VISITOR CENTER IN 2022. THE TRIBE HAS USED THEIR AUTHORITY TO SHARE YUOK HISTORY AND CURRENT MANAGEMENT OF THE AREA WITH VISITORS, TO CONDUCT CULTURAL EVENTS, AND TO SELL CONCESSIONS HONORING YUOK ARTISANS, HISTORIANS, AND STORYTELLERS.

HOW: THE AGREEMENT IS THE FIRST-EVER JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT BETWEEN STATE PARKS AND A TRIBE. CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE § 6500 WAS AMENDED IN 2011 TO INCLUDE FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBES AS PUBLIC AGENCIES AUTHORIZED TO ENTER INTO THE AGREEMENTS, WHICH ALLOW TWO OR MORE PUBLIC AGENCIES TO JOINTLY EXERCISE THEIR POWERS.

PARTNERS: THE YUOK TRIBE, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION.



Photo by Geneva E.B. Thompson

SHARED

DEFERRED

DELEGATED

CO-STEWARDSHIP OF CHUCKWALLA NATIONAL MONUMENT

WHO: CHUCKWALLA NATIONAL MONUMENT INTERTRIBAL COMMISSION

WHAT: THE CHUCKWALLA NATIONAL MONUMENT PROTECTS OVER 600,000 ACRES OF LAND MANAGED BY THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT IN THE SONORAN AND MOJAVE DESERTS. THE TORRES MARTINEZ DESERT CAHUILLA INDIANS, THE FORT YUMA QUECHAN INDIAN TRIBE, THE CAHUILLA BAND OF INDIANS, THE CHEMEHUEVI INDIAN TRIBE, THE COLORADO RIVER INDIAN TRIBES, THE MORONGO BAND OF MISSION INDIANS, AND THE TWENTY-NINE PALMS BAND OF MISSION INDIANS LED THE CALL TO ESTABLISH THE MONUMENT, AND THE DESIGNATION HONORS TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY AND ENCOURAGES THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CO-STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND TRIBES WITH TIES TO THE AREA. AS PART OF THIS CO-STEWARDSHIP, FIVE TRIBES ANNOUNCED THE FORMATION OF THE CHUCKWALLA NATIONAL MONUMENT INTERTRIBAL COMMISSION TO INSTITUTIONALIZE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE TRIBES AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR THE SHARED MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL MONUMENT.

HOW: THE MONUMENT WAS CREATED IN 2025 THROUGH THE ANTIQUITIES ACT--A 1906 LAW THAT GRANTS U.S. PRESIDENTS THE ABILITY TO DESIGNATE FEDERAL PUBLIC LANDS, WATERS, AND CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SITES AS NATIONAL MONUMENTS WITH A PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION. WHILE TRIBES LED THE EFFORT, THEY WERE SUPPORTED BY THE CITIES OF BANNING, CATHEDRAL CITY, DESERT HOT SPRINGS, INDIAN WELLS, INDIO, LA QUINTA, PALM DESERT, AND PALM SPRINGS, LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS, 300+ BUSINESSES, BUSINESS GROUPS, CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, AND THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE VIA A BIPARTISAN RESOLUTION.

PARTNERS: TORRES MARTINEZ DESERT CAHUILLA INDIANS, THE FORT YUMA QUECHAN INDIAN TRIBE, THE CAHUILLA BAND OF INDIANS, THE CHEMEHUEVI INDIAN TRIBE, AND THE COLORADO RIVER INDIAN TRIBES, AND BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT.



Photo by Meagan Flier

SHARED DEFERRED DELEGATED



BIG VALLEY BAND OF POMO INDIANS SIGN MOU WITH STATE PARKS TO COLLABORATIVELY MANAGE CLEAR LAKE STATE PARK

WHO: BIG VALLEY BAND OF POMO INDIANS OF THE BIG VALLEY RANCHERIA AND CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

WHAT: BIG VALLEY BAND OF POMO INDIANS OF THE BIG VALLEY RANCHERIA SIGNED A MOU WITH CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS TO COLLABORATIVELY MANAGE CLEAR LAKE STATE PARK, WHICH IS WITHIN THE TRIBE'S ANCESTRAL HOMELANDS.

HOW: THE MOU IDENTIFIED MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE PARK'S MANAGEMENT ON WHICH BOTH PARTIES WILL COLLABORATE, INCLUDING THE INCORPORATION OF TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE INTO PARK MANAGEMENT AND PRESERVING AND PROTECTING THE BEAUTY AND BIODIVERSITY OF CLEAR LAKE.

SHARED DEFERRED DELEGATED

COLLABORATION IN ACTION

THE YUOK TRIBE REINTRODUCES THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR

WHO: YUOK TRIBE

WHAT: THE YUOK TRIBE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, AND STATE PARKS HAVE REINTRODUCED PREY-GO-NEESH, THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR, BACK TO YUOK ANCESTRAL TERRITORY. THIS REINTRODUCTION IS ESSENTIAL FOR RESTORING BALANCE AND BIODIVERSITY OF THE REGION AND PROMOTE A THRIVING ECOLOGY FOR THE BENEFIT OF WILDLIFE AND HUMANS.

PARTNERS: THE YUOK TRIBE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, REDWOOD NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS, PINNACLES NATIONAL PARK, VENTANA WILDLIFE SOCIETY, THE PEREGRINE FUND, THE OREGON ZOO, THE LOS ANGELES ZOO, THE SAN DIEGO ZOO, AND THE OAKLAND ZOO.



SHARED

DEFERRED

DELEGATED



LEADERS FROM FEDERATED INDIANS OF GRATON RANCHERIA, U.S. NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE, AND CALIFORNIA NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY SHARING LESSONS LEARNED ON THE BENEFITS OF CO-STEWARDSHIP IN NATIONAL PARKS.





Fire practitioners gather acorns at an intertribal beneficial fire training led by the Berry Creek Rancheria of Tyme Maidu Indians in 2025. Photo courtesy of CAL FIRE

STEWARDSHIP PATHWAY #3

ACCESS

TRIBAL ACCESS means California Native American tribes have access to their ancestral lands and the ability to engage in activities that encourage tribal members to experience, enjoy, use, and be in relation with their ancestral lands, the outdoors and environment, sacred places, ceremonies, tribal cultural resources, and natural resources. Tribal access to ancestral lands may include activities for traditional, cultural, religious, or ceremonial purposes, and/or may include more general access by tribal members to ancestral lands in the spirit of truth and healing. Affirmation by a California Native American tribe to a non-tribal party of the traditional, cultural, spiritual, or religious purpose of an activity is sufficient, and non-tribal entities should not attempt to make their own determination of religious, cultural, ceremonial, or traditional purposes. Non-tribal entities should give deference to tribes in determining the access needs for these purposes.

Tribal Access Agreement means an agreement entered into between one or more California Native American tribe(s) and non-tribal entity(ies) for a defined area within the tribes' ancestral territory. Access agreements should be durable and ensure that tribes are able to access lands according to mutually beneficial tribal priorities, and in a way that is private, protected, safe from hazards, welcoming, convenient, affordable, and culturally relevant. Tribal access agreements may include, but are not limited to:

- Promote and encourage tribal access to lands and waters.
- Support tribally led restoration, species recovery and management, and scientific data collection.
- Encourage tribally approved activities, events, and programs.
- Provide financial or other beneficial resources.
- Create privacy and other protective measures to support tribally approved activities and limit non-tribal interference.
- Reduce or remove administrative, permitting, fiscal, logistical, or other barriers tribes face in experiencing, enjoying, using, and being in relation with an area and its resources.

The parties to an access agreement should discuss the type of access contemplated in the agreement. The terms of type of access should be clearly articulated in the access agreement and can include **(1) restricted access; (2) limited access; and/or (3) unlimited access** to a particular area or resource.

THE SPECTRUM OF TRIBAL ACCESS AGREEMENTS

FOR EXAMPLE, A LANDOWNER AND A TRIBE MAY ENTER INTO AN ACCESS AGREEMENT TO ARTICULATE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACCESS FOR DIFFERENT AREAS ON A PROPERTY. WHERE THE TRIBE HAS UNLIMITED ACCESS TO A PORTION OF THE PROPERTY TO COME AND GO AS DESIRED. IN ANOTHER AREA, THEY MAY HAVE LIMITED ACCESS BASED ON CERTAIN DAYS, TIMES, AND EVENTS. LASTLY, ANOTHER AREA MAY HAVE RESTRICTED ACCESS FOR CERTAIN PRE-APPROVED EVENTS AT CERTAIN PRE-APPROVED TIMES. THE TYPE OF ACCESS SHOULD BE CLEARLY DISCUSSED AND DOCUMENTED IN THE ACCESS AGREEMENT AND REGULARLY REVIEWED.

Tribal access agreements can take many forms including memoranda of understanding, memoranda of agreements, and other written agreements. Additional tools to support access agreements can include legislation, contracts, grants, leases, easements, permits, and other written documents. Developing access agreements may require time to build trust and should respect tribal timelines and resources.



YUOK TRIBE PARTNERS WITH STATE PARKS TO RENAME A PARK TO ORIGINAL YUOK NAME

WHO: YUOK TRIBE AND STATE PARKS

WHAT: THE YUOK TRIBE PARTNERED WITH CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS TO RE-NAME WHAT WAS PREVIOUSLY CALLED PATRICK'S POINT STATE PARK TO SUE-MEG STATE PARK. THE NAME "SUE-MEG" HAS BEEN USED BY THE YUOK PEOPLE TO DESCRIBE THE AREA WHERE THE PARK IS NOW LOCATED SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL. THE NAME

CHANGE HELPS CREATE A MORE WELCOMING SPACE BY ACKNOWLEDGING HISTORICAL WRONGS AND ACCURATELY REFLECTING THE YUOK HISTORY AND CULTURAL OF THESE LANDS.

HOW: THE YUOK TRIBE FORMALLY REQUESTED THE NAME CHANGE AS PART OF THE STATE'S REEXAMINING OUR PAST INITIATIVE IN JANUARY 2021. THE FOLLOWING SEPTEMBER THE CALIFORNIA STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE NAME CHANGE.

PARTNERS: THE YUOK TRIBE, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION, AND CALIFORNIA STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION.



Photo by Brian Baer, © State Parks 2022



FERNANDEÑO TATAVIAM BAND OF MISSION INDIANS' ACCESS AGREEMENT FOR CITY PARK LANDS

WHO: FERNANDEÑO TATAVIAM BAND OF MISSION INDIANS

WHAT: IN 2009, THE FERNANDEÑO TATAVIAM BAND OF MISSION INDIANS PARTNERED WITH THE CITY OF SAN FERNANDO AND PARKS AND RECREATION TO RENAME A CITY-OWNED PARK ON AFTER FORMER TRIBAL PRESIDENT RUDY ORTEGA SR. AND ENTERED INTO AN ACCESS AGREEMENT DETAILING TATAVIAM ACCESS TO THE PARK FOR TATAVIAM PROGRAMMING, MAINTENANCE OF A TRADITIONAL PLANTS GARDEN, AND OTHER CULTURAL ACTIVITIES.

HOW: THE ACCESS AGREEMENT CREATED A PROCESS BY WHICH THE CITY OF SAN FERNANDO AND THE TRIBE WOULD SCHEDULE TATAVIAM PROGRAMMING, WAIVE SOME FEES ASSOCIATED WITH TATAVIAM USE OF THE PARK, AND INFORM PARK MAINTENANCE WITH TATAVIAM KNOWLEDGE.

PARTNERS: FERNANDEÑO TATAVIAM BAND OF MISSION INDIANS AND CITY OF SAN FERNANDO.

ACCESS IN ACTION



Photo by Kori Cordero ©

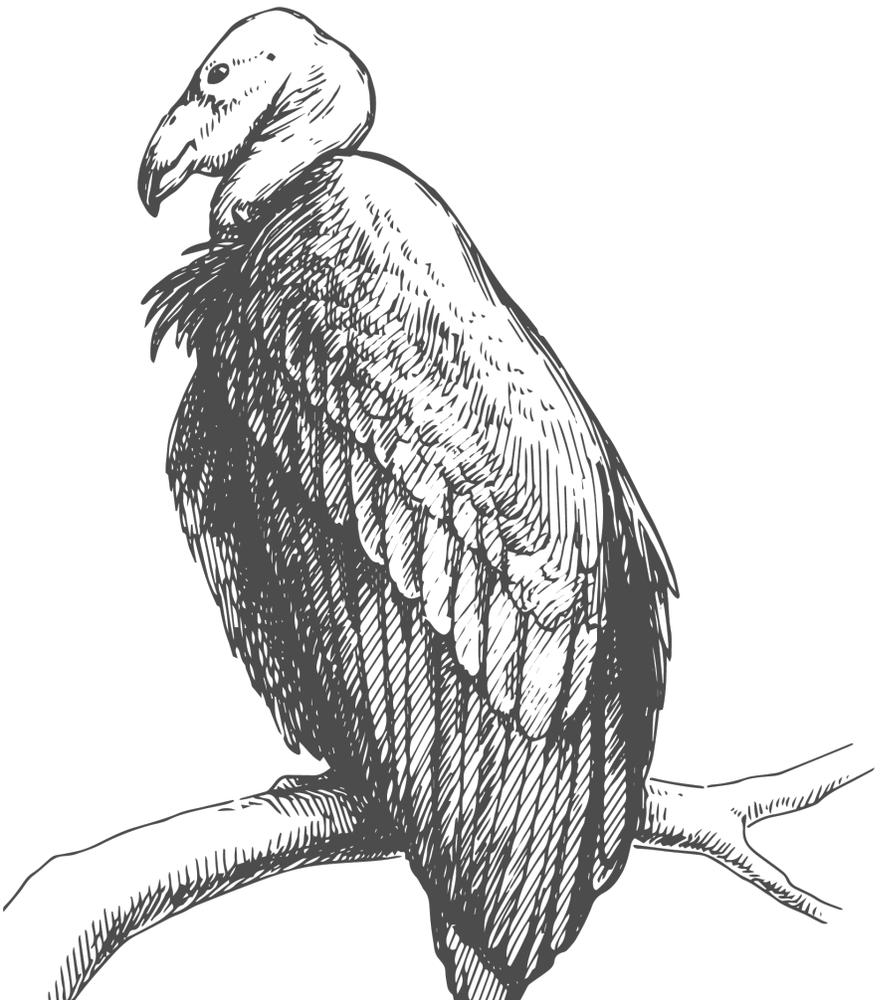
TRIBES HOLD TULE BOAT RACES THROUGH ACCESS AGREEMENT WITH STATE PARKS

WHO: WILTON RANCHERIA, THE SHINGLE SPRINGS BAND OF MIWOK INDIANS, AND UNITED AUBURN INDIAN COMMUNITY

WHAT: IN 2025, LOCAL TRIBES GATHERED AT STATE PARK LANDS AT THE AMERICAN RIVER IN FOLSOM FOR THE INAUGURAL INTERTRIBAL TULE BOAT RACES. TRIBAL MEMBERS SPENT THE SPRING GATHERING MATERIALS FOR TULE BOATS FROM TRIBAL LANDS AND EACH TRIBE HELD ITS OWN BOAT BUILDING DAY FOR YOUTH AND ELDERS.

HOW: THE TRIBES PARTNERED WITH CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS TO ORGANIZE THE EVENT THROUGH AN ACCESS AGREEMENT, ENSURING PARKING PASSES WERE AVAILABLE TO PARTICIPANTS, PROVIDING LIFE VESTS, AND HONORING TRIBAL ANCESTORS, CULTURE, AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE WATER AND LAND.

PARTNERS: WILTON RANCHERIA, THE SHINGLE SPRINGS BAND OF MIWOK INDIANS, UNITED AUBURN INDIAN COMMUNITY, AND THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION.





Pit River Tribal Chairman Yatch Bamford and State Parks Director, Armando Quintero sign an MOU in front of Pit River Tribal Council Representatives at McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park. Photo: Brian Baer, © California State Parks 2024

INSTITUTIONALIZING COMMITMENTS TO TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP

RESPECTFUL, DURABLE, & MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL AGREEMENTS

The collaboration and access agreements and ancestral land return projects established with California Native American tribes pursuant to this Policy should be mutually beneficial, durable, and respectful:

MUTUAL BENEFIT means all parties in an agreement or relationship gain value or advancement in individual or shared priorities or goals. The designation of what is mutually beneficial for tribes can only be determined by tribal leadership and their communities utilizing their internal processes.

For this Policy, prioritizing and understanding tribal stewardship is beneficial to all Californians. All parties in an agreement or relationship gain value through restoring tribal stewardship because it benefits tribal and non-tribal communities alike through improving the health of California’s ecosystems, building resiliency to a changing climate, strengthening restoration economies in rural communities, improving biodiversity, and healing historical wrongs. Non-tribal entities directly and indirectly benefit from the promotion of tribal sovereignty; nurturing traditional foods; implementation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge; benefiting from the application of Traditional Knowledge and tribal

expertise; strengthening of local economies; and the opportunity to meet state policy goals and obligations, among other things.

DURABLE AGREEMENTS means California Native American tribes can rely on the relationship built and reflected in a written document. Durable agreements should be long-lasting, survive changes in leadership and staffing, and iterate commitment between the parties to maintain the relationship into the future. For an agreement to be considered durable, it must include at least one of the following:

- A **robust dispute resolution clause** with the goal of collaborative problem-solving and preserving commitments made between the parties. While some dispute resolution clauses are not legally binding, the agreements should include a detailed process the parties will follow to discuss disputes and tangible steps the parties will take with the goal of preserving the partnership and commitments made.
- A **public process** to gather input and evaluate a proposed action to amend or terminate an agreement. This may include an act of a tribal council, the California Legislature, U.S. Congress, an agency, committee, or board hearing or public meeting(s), or court to reverse the commitments made in the agreement. These agreements may include statutes, regulations, executive orders, or proclamations that establish and/or authorize commitments between the parties.
- A **legally binding agreement**, deed, or other document with legally enforceable terms preserving commitments made between the parties. Typically most ancestral land return projects will have a legally binding commitment through the transfer of a deed or permanent easement recorded on a deed.

RESPECTFUL AGREEMENTS means California Native American tribes, timelines, process, data, expertise, oral histories, culture, spirituality, and privacy are respected in ways defined and controlled by tribes. Respectful agreements may include the incorporation of tribal data sovereignty priorities and/or the development of confidentiality agreements.

Information shared by tribes to non-tribal entities should not be shared outside of the partnership without explicit permission from tribal leadership. Non-tribal entities shall disclose to tribes when California or other laws may require disclosure, for example the California Public Records Act.



TRIBAL STEWARDSHIP POLICY TOOLKIT

Agency will maintain a website that will be regularly updated with topic specific entries to provide information and capacity support in the implementation of this Policy. Entries will provide specific tools to advance ancestral land return, collaboration, and access. Additionally, Toolkit entries will be developed to support state staff and other non-tribal entities' capacity including training opportunities on the history of California Native American tribes, tribal consultations, and cultural humility. These entries may include recordings of webinars, trainings, roundtables, and other gatherings; templates and examples of written documents, FAQs, website links, and bibliographies, and educational materials to provide resources for specific topics to advance ancestral land return, collaboration, and access.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS POLICY

This Policy is intended for Agency and its departments. This Policy does not bind or impose any standards or limitations on California Native American tribes. This Policy invites other state agencies, the federal government, local governments, non-profit organizations, conservancies, land trusts, colleges and universities, philanthropy, other states, and private landowners to help advance tribal stewardship through meaningful and durable tribal access, collaboration, and the return of ancestral lands to California Native American tribes.

This Policy is not intended, and should not be construed, to define the legal relationship between Agency and its departments and California Native American tribes or tribal communities. This Policy is not a regulation, and it does not create, expand, limit, or waive any laws, legal rights, or legal obligations, nor is it intended to be punitive such that it alters any existing collectively bargained for employment rights or memoranda of understanding between unions and the state.



Wade Crowfoot

Secretary

California Natural Resources Agency

3/16/2026

Date