

STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL TAKES PART IN MEANINGFUL CELEBRATION AS THE MOUNTAIN MAIDU RECLAIM ANCESTRAL LANDS THAT WILL NOW BE CONSERVED IN PERPETUITY

A compelling story of conservation and return of more than 2,300 acres of ancestral lands

Roseville, Calif., Sept. 2019 – For generations, the Mountain Maidu inhabited northeastern California in the Sierra Nevada mountain range within Plumas and southern Lassen counties. As semi-nomadic hunters and gatherers, the Maidu people lived in harmony with the land, connected to the natural and spiritual processes they nurtured. For Maidu people, as original stewards of their land, it's long overdue to reclaim ownership of over 2,300 acres of their sacred place called Humbug Valley or Tásmam Kojóm.

On September 20, 2019, tribal elders and members, tribal youth and many new and long-standing partners, including the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council), gathered to commemorate the formal return of this special land. The celebration, held at Yellow Creek Campground in Plumas County, was the culmination of a multi-year process resulting in a unique collaborative partnership between the Maidu, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the Feather River Land Trust (FRLT) to care for and steward the land. The Maidu Summit Consortium (MSC) – a nonprofit organization comprised of nine individual Mountain Maidu groups, tribes and grass-roots organizations – hosted the event.



Celebration event at Tásmam Kojóm / Robyn White



Maidu traditional singers at Tásmam Kojóm / Ronee Robertson

MSC was joined by numerous community members and partners including California Governor Gavin Newsom's Tribal Advisor, Christina Snider, representatives from the FRLT, the California Public Utilities Commission, CDFW, PG&E and the Stewardship Council to share this iconic moment in history. Amid the towering trees and lush meadow, event participants honored and paid great homage to the past with prayer, song and story while building excitement about the future of the sacred landscape of Tásmam Kojóm and its original people, the Mountain Maidu. "The historic return of Tásmam Kojóm to the Maidu people does not change California's dark history, but is a step toward recognizing the truth of the past and moving forward to create partnership with California Native people," stated Commissioner Martha

Guzman Aceves of the California Public Utilities Commission.

This opportunity to return ancestral homelands was born out of a PG&E settlement agreement in 2003 to conserve more than 140,000 acres of PG&E land holdings in exchange for financial bankruptcy relief. The lands fall within California's major forests and watersheds that are steeped in habitat, culture and tradition. Through the settlement, the Stewardship Council, a private nonprofit organization, was formed to ensure these lands will be conserved in perpetuity for a diverse range of beneficial public values through the conveyance of conservation easements.

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***Maidu generations gathering in Tásmam Kojóm /
Ronee Robertson***

Mike Schonherr, PG&E Director of Strategic Agreements and a Stewardship Council Board member noted, “PG&E is pleased to donate land in this beautiful and culturally significant valley, knowing this critical resource will forever be protected by the Consortium and continue to be available for the enjoyment of future generations of the Maidu people and the public.”

The conservation easement holders, FRLT and CDFW are charged with ensuring the protection of the property, but more than that, CDFW will partner with the Maidu to assist in land management activities to protect the natural and cultural resources including Yellow Creek, which is an important wild trout fishery.

CDFW North Central Regional Manager Kevin Thomas quoted, “The Department looks forward to a continued partnership with the Maidu Summit Consortium at Tásmam Kojóm. The blending of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and modern fish and wildlife management techniques will provide a significant benefit to the plants and animals that call Tásmam Kojóm home. This partnership will serve as a model for the future of cooperative land management between tribal groups and the Department of Fish and Wildlife.”

For 15 years the Stewardship Council has advised, planned and provided recommendations on actions to PG&E for each parcel. Since its inception, the Stewardship Council has worked extensively with local, state and federal partners across California to conserve the watershed lands for public good, while also investing in efforts to connect underserved youth with the outdoors. Protection and enhancement of the land is a primary goal to establish a lasting connection between land, native culture and diverse communities in California. “We are honored to play a role in this significant transfer of land and to have the opportunity to foster deep connections to the land’s history through this process,” commented Heidi Krolick, Stewardship Council Executive Director.



***Yellow Creek as it winds through the newly
reclaimed Tásmam Kojóm, California / Robyn White***

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Ownership of Tásmam Kojóm will allow Maidu cultural heritage to be nurtured, while providing education and employment opportunities in support of future Maidu generations and community partners. Larry Myers, Stewardship Council Board member representing California tribal interests stated, "The return of ownership to the Maidu people of this land will have a profound impact on future generations. This land is a vital part of their cultural heritage. I am proud to have contributed to this effort." MSC has a clear vision for this sacred land. It will soon become California's first Native American tribal cultural park, providing unique opportunities for the public to recreate while learning about tribal culture, history and the areas natural resources. Plans for this open space park include guided interpretive tours, a public campground, basket-weaving instruction and restoration of the nearly lost Maidu language.



Allen Lowry MSC Vice Chair / Ronee Robertson



Maidu youth, with elder Beverly Ogle, cutting ribbon symbolizing the significance as future stewards of Maidu land, language and culture. Tásmam Kojóm, California / Ronee Robertson

One of the last remaining speakers of the Maidu language, MSC Vice Chair Allen Lowry recalled his heritage and deep appreciation for the return of these ancestral lands when he told the crowd, "This is our land again and it is good." Echoing Lowry's appreciation for the past and hope for the future, Ken Holbrook, MSC Executive Director and youngest son of elder and author Beverly Ogle said, "This land ownership represents our time to honor our ancestors and carry our traditions forward through our children and grandchildren's children." Maidu youth played an important part in Friday's ceremony as they cut the orange Maidu ribbon symbolizing the release of PG&E's ownership and the unveiling of a new era of Maidu land stewardship, Maidu people and Maidu futures.

To learn more about the Maidu Summit Consortium and their profound story, visit maidusummit.org or follow along on Facebook at MaiduSummit. More information on the Stewardship Council can be found at stewardshipcouncil.org.

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