
R-21-107
Meeting 21-20
October 28, 2021

AGENDA ITEM #3

To: Board of Directors
Open Space Authority

From: Andrea Mackenzie
General Manager

SUBJECT

Approve Resolution 21-70 Acknowledging November Native American Month

REVENUE/COST

There is no cost associated with this item.

BACKGROUND

Native American Heritage Month, federally recognized and celebrated annually in November, is, according to the National Congress of American Indians, to recognize the significant contributions the first Americans made to the United States, educate about the First Peoples of America, raise awareness about the past and continued challenges Indigenous Peoples experience, and the ways in which these challenges have been overcome.

The Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (Authority) is committed to better understanding the field and context that the agency works within, which includes the complex and violent history experienced by Indigenous Peoples in the region, the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and governing bodies within California, the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and lands managed by the Authority, the role Indigenous Peoples have played in land stewardship practices for millennia, and their centuries-long fight for equal opportunity and access to their sacred lands.

Indigenous Peoples have lived, cared for, and developed cultural practices and traditions which are intertwined with the land in this region for many thousands of years. European arrival in North America, succeeded by Spanish colonists and missionaries, forever changed Indigenous ways of life. What followed was years of severe disease outbreak, cultural repression and subjugation emblazoned by virulent racism, murder sanctioned by the State of California, and rapidly diminishing populations – by 1870, the pre-contact population of up to 300,000 First Peoples dwindled to, by some estimates, a staggering 20,000 individuals.

As the Authority makes strides in expanding protected lands and developing robust community engagement initiatives, it is actively working to build relationships with local Tribal partners to involve them as it creates plans for these landscapes protected in perpetuity. Specifically, the Authority is building relationships with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area and aims to continue strengthening these partnerships over time. Cultural resources, artifacts, and burials of the ancestors of these Tribes are found on Authority preserves. The Authority is fulfilling its values and mission to manage and protect the land, provide educational resources to the

public, and raise awareness about the past and the future of Indigenous Peoples in this region through direct Tribal partnership. Further, the Authority is developing its first Land Acknowledgement, a statement that publicly acknowledges the violent and unjust history of Indigenous Peoples in this region associated with colonization *and* their continued efforts toward seeking justice, perpetuating their culture, and stewarding local landscapes.

DISCUSSION

The Authority is actively working to build relationships with local Tribal partners and seeks to acknowledge their presence in the region and relationship to the land. Native American Heritage Month is celebrated annually in November to recognize the significant contributions the first Americans made to the establishment and growth of the U.S., educate the public about Tribes, raise a general awareness about the unique challenges Indigenous Peoples have faced both historically and in the present, and the ways in which these challenges have been overcome.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the Resolution Recognizing Native American Heritage Month and acknowledging the original Peoples of these lands.

Prepared by:

Jennifer Hooper, Assistant Open Space Planner

Attachment(s): Resolution 21-70-- A Resolution of the Governing Board of the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority Recognizing Native American Heritage Month and Acknowledging the Original Peoples of These Lands