



ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT

Flora Lu, Professor and Pepper-Giberson Chair
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95064
Email: floralu@ucsc.edu
Phone: 831-459-2034

Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
70 West Hedding Street, East Wing, 10th Floor
San Jose, CA 95110

October 8, 2017

Dear Supervisors Wasserman, Chavez, Cortese, Yeager and Simitian,

I write to you as an Ecological Anthropologist with 25 years of experience investigating Indigenous peoples' stewardship of natural resources and confrontations with extractive industries. As a professor and provost, I educate students on issues of environmental justice and Indigenous self-determination. I oversee student-led and organized courses and conferences that foster civic engagement and activism. I also develop programming that highlights diverse cultural understandings of sustainability and environmental issues in general. I am fortunate to work with UCSC students who, like other young people in Bay Area—including many your constituents—are politically committed, and active. They organize and vote with issues of social justice and environmental protection in mind, because they recognize these to be inextricable causes. Like you, they are invested in assuring that our elected representatives in the Bay Area and Central Coast, and all of California continue to practice, not merely discuss, progressive leadership.

It is in this spirit that I exhort you to oppose the proposed gravel and sand mine at Juristac, a sacred site to the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band located on land currently held by the Sargent Ranch Management Company. The Amah Mutsun people, culture, homeland, and spirituality has been systematically discriminated against by all colonizers including the Catholic Church, Spain, Mexico, California, and the United States. The proposed desecration of Juristac is yet another example of the legacies of settler colonialism, which—through violence and dispossession—has imposed changes in land use regimes, decimated the abundance of flora and fauna, and ruptured people's connection to place.

Racism, colonialism, and their legacies in our political and financial systems are not only historical. They are alive and contemporary, witness Ferguson, Standing Rock, Charlottesville, witness the Presidency. My research in Ecuador shows that government officials often profess their respect for the rights of Indigenous peoples and nature, and simultaneously lend their support to extractive projects in the ancestral homes of Indigenous people. Doing so often results

in the suffering of marginalized groups. Situations like these—with many parallels to Juristac—signal deep and publicly visible contradictions in the political commitments of elected officials.

You have the power to influence whether the culture, traditional lands, and spirituality of the Mutsun people will be respected and protected, or whether shortsighted corporate interests will perpetuate the trauma that they have suffered. Offering economic “benefits” and/or minor concessions to local communities does little to mitigate the negative social and environmental effects of projects like the proposed sand and gravel mine at Juristac. The Amah Mutsun have made it clear that their cultural obligations—to the Creator, to ancestors and generations to come—are their priorities, and are central to their political concerns despite their deep economic need. Your stand in solidarity with them would be tremendously important and would not go unrecognized by their allies and your constituents.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Flora Lu". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "Flora" and "Lu" being capitalized and prominent.

Flora Lu, Ph.D.
Professor and Pepper-Giberson Endowed Chair, Environmental Studies Department
Provost, College Nine and College Ten
University of California, Santa Cruz