

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
Board of Supervisors
70 West Hedding Street, East Wing, 10th Floor
San Jose, CA 95110
Operations@cob.sccgov.org



October 11th 2017

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of The Gaia Foundation, a UK-based non-governmental organisation working globally to safeguard indigenous rights and ecosystems, in support of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, their international right to free, prior and informed consent and self-determination, and constitutional right to religious freedom.

Our concern relates to the proposed Sargent Quarry Project, an extractive venture that threatens Juristac, a sacred site that Tribal Chairman Valentin Lopez describes as the Amah Mutsun's "Jerusalem". If approved, this project would permit surface sand and gravel mining on nearly 320 acres of the Amah Mutsun's ancestral lands, including Juristac. It would permanently prevent the Amah Mustun from accessing Juristac and carrying out their spiritual practices.

For over three decades The Gaia Foundation has been supporting indigenous custodians of sacred natural sites to secure greater protections for these spiritually, culturally and ecologically critical areas. These efforts, undertaken with many allies, have led to a growing recognition at international level of the critical importance of sacred natural sites to both the realisation of indigenous peoples rights and biodiversity conservation.

As a result, in 2016 the International Union for the Conservation of Nature- the world's largest conservation body- passed a recommendation (Recommendation 102)¹ calling on the world's governments, decision-makers and businesses to respect sacred natural sites and territories as 'no-go areas' for environmentally damaging industrial activities, like mining and quarrying, and to respect indigenous peoples' rights to free, prior and informed consent as enshrined in the UN's 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to which the U.S.A gave its support in December 2010.²

¹ See:

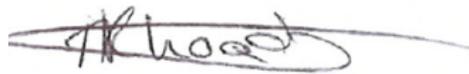
https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecfiles/wcc_2016_rec_102_en.pdf

² See: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/dec/16/obama-adopts-un-manifesto-on-rights-of-indigenous-/>

We are aware of the State of California's long history of infringement on the rights of native peoples like the Amah Mutsun, their ancestral lands and sacred natural sites. We join the Amah Mutsun in calling upon the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors to acknowledge these difficult truths and to make different choices in the present than were made in the past with regards to native peoples rights, lands and sacred sites.

In line with the growing international consensus that native peoples' access to- and the health of- sacred sites is a pre-requisite for the realisation of their rights, both international and constitutional, we recommend that you do not approve or proceed with the Sargent Quarry Project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H Rhoades", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hannibal Rhoades
Communications and Advocacy Coordinator
The Gaia Foundation, UK
hannibal@gaianet.org