



February 7, 2020

Sent via email

Mayor Justin Cummings, and
City Councilmembers
City of Santa Cruz
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Re: Letter In Support of City of Santa Cruz Resolution Supporting the Preservation of Juristac As Open Space

Dear Mayor Cummings and City Councilmembers:

The Center for Biological Diversity (the “Center”) submits this letter in support of the proposed Resolution of the City Council of the City of Santa Cruz In Support of the Efforts of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band to Preserve Sargent Ranch/Juristac as Open Space (Agenda Item No. 7 on the Council’s Agenda for its February 11, 2020 public meeting) (“Juristac Resolution”).

The Center is a non-profit, public interest environmental organization dedicated to the protection of native species and their habitats through science, policy, and environmental law. The Center has over 74,000 members throughout California and the United States and has worked for many years to protect imperiled plants and wildlife, open space, air and water quality, and overall quality of life for people in the region surrounding Juristac.

The Center applauds the foresight and leadership of the City of Santa Cruz in considering the Juristac Resolution. As the City is aware, the site has great cultural significance to the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. In addition, Juristac’s undisturbed grasslands, oak and riparian woodlands, streams, and wetlands provide crucial habitat for thousands of plant and animal species. These beautiful lands provide habitat for federally endangered and threatened wildlife, including iconic state species like the California tiger salamander, the California red-legged frog, and the California condor.

The Juristac area is also an important corridor for regional wildlife movement. Roads and development can box in and isolate animal subpopulations and threaten their survival. For example, loss of habitat corridors for mountain lion populations in the Santa Cruz Mountains has led to dangerous levels of inbreeding and low genetic diversity. Mountain lions in the area are now vulnerable to extinction. But Juristac provides hope. The area provides crucial connectivity for wildlife movement between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Diablo Range. We can't allow further habitat loss and fragmentation in this important linkage. We must preserve California's unique habitats, animals, and plants while respecting the historical and spiritual significance of places like Juristac.

The Center stands with Chairman Lopez and the Amah Mutsun Tribe to protect their traditional lands and urges the City Council to adopt the proposed Juristac Resolution at its February 11, 2020 meeting.

Sincerely,



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CC: Bonnie Bush, City Clerk Administrator