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City of Mountain View Stands With Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, Approving Resolution to Oppose Mining on Sacred Lands

Proposed Open-Pit Mine in Santa Clara County Would Destroy Sacred Landscape and Wildlife Corridor

Mountain View, CA -- On Tuesday evening, April 25, the Mountain View City Council adopted a resolution urging Santa Clara County officials to deny permits for an open-pit mine on land sacred to a local Indigenous tribe and critical for wildlife migration. Juristac -- a sacred landscape comprising thousands of acres, including the property known today as Sargent Ranch -- is located in the hills southeast of Gilroy and is in the ancestral homelands of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band.

“Today the City of Mountain View stands in solidarity with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and environmental groups in support of protecting Juristac as open space,” said Mountain View **Mayor Alison Hicks**. “This is about creating a more sustainable, just and equitable future for our region.”

Valentin Lopez, Chairman of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, commended the City Council for their leadership in addressing threats to the sacred lands of local Indigenous peoples. “We appreciate this recognition by the City of Mountain View that the rights of Indigenous peoples matter and that the destruction of the sacred Amah Mutsun site of Juristac is a significant cultural and environmental issue for the entire county,” he said.

More than 40 tribal members and members of the public gathered in the courtyard outside of Mountain View City Hall and attended the council meeting in a show of support. Public comments in support of the resolution were delivered by representatives of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, Green Foothills, the ACLU of Northern California, Greenbelt Alliance, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and Mountain View residents.

The City of Mountain View resolution comes while the Tribe and a coalition of dozens of environmental, human rights and community organizations wait to hear the County’s next steps. More than 7,500 letters were submitted in late 2022 during the public comment period for the [draft Environmental Impact Report](#) that assessed the potential impacts of the proposed mine.

The County's analysis found that the project would cause significant and unavoidable impacts in at least six areas including biological resources, cultural and tribal cultural resources, air quality and transportation.

The Mountain View resolution follows unanimous approval of similar resolutions opposing the planned mining operation by the cities of [Sunnyvale](#), [Santa Clara](#), [Morgan Hill](#), [Gilroy](#) and [Santa Cruz](#). These resolutions send a strong message to the County that local communities widely oppose the project. The [California Democratic Party](#), [Santa Clara County Human Rights Commission](#) and the [ACLU of Northern California](#) have also expressed opposition to the proposed mine, as have [many elected officials and community organizations](#).

"We are truly heartened by Mountain View's resolution today," said **Alice Kaufman**, policy and advocacy director at Green Foothills, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting open space that opposes the proposed mine. "We hope the proponents of this open-pit mine get the message: the people of this area don't want this sacred Indigenous landscape and critical wildlife corridor destroyed for sand and gravel. There is no version of this mining proposal that would not cause permanent damage to this landscape."

"We want to restore our ceremonies at Juristac, we want to restore prayers, we want to restore the traditional ways of taking care of the lands there, and use it to show others how to take care of the lands elsewhere as well," **Chairman Lopez** shared with the crowd of supporters gathered outside of Mountain View City Hall, following the successful vote on the resolution.

Mine Will Destroy Sacred Landscape

According to documents filed with the County of Santa Clara, the proposed open-pit sand and gravel mine would operate for 30 years, excavating three pits hundreds of feet deep in the hillsides of Juristac, and requiring hundreds of heavy truck trips per day on Highway 101 to transport the sand and gravel. County officials have the responsibility to determine if the permit should be granted.

"The County has the opportunity to respect our spirituality and deny this project. We are relying on them to do the right thing," **Chairman Lopez** said.

A Vital Landscape Linkage for Wildlife

Juristac is one of the Bay Area's most important regions for wildlife and is a top conservation priority for both tribal and environmental leaders. In every wildlife connectivity study of the region, Juristac is highlighted as one of the most critical wildlife linkages in the Bay Area with regional and statewide importance. Together with Coyote Valley, 25 miles to the north, Juristac is one of only two undeveloped pathways for wildlife to migrate into and out of the Santa Cruz Mountains towards the Gabilan Range and the Pajaro Valley watershed to the south.

"Without this linkage, animals like mountain lions will become isolated and unable to travel between the Santa Cruz mountains and the mountain ranges to the east and south," said **Kaufman**. "The proposed open-pit mine would destroy this linkage by blocking migration routes and creating noise and heavy vehicle traffic that will drive away and endanger sensitive wildlife species. Mountain lions – a keystone species for the entire ecosystem – are already seriously threatened by habitat loss. We can't afford to allow this mine to destroy their ability to migrate to find food and mates."

The Spiritual Center for the Amah Mutsun

Juristac sits at the heart of the Amah Mutsun's ancestral lands. For the Mutsun people, it is the home of a spiritual being known as Kuksui. For thousands of years, the Amah Mutsun lived and held sacred ceremonies at Juristac, which means "Place of the Big Head" in honor of the Big Head dances held at this location. These ceremonies for healing and renewal were often attended by neighboring tribes.

"We honor our ancestors by returning to the places where they held sacred ceremonies," **Chairman Lopez** stated. "For thousands and thousands of years, our people fulfilled their responsibilities to manage and protect these lands. We cannot let that be forgotten. We have a duty to protect Juristac. Without this spiritual site, we lose our purpose for being here."

The Tribe, which owns no land within its traditional territory, draws a clear connection between today's threats to sacred sites and the legacy of colonial violence Indigenous people have endured. "The destruction and domination of Amah Mutsun culture, spirituality, environment and people never ended," **Chairman Lopez** stated. "It just evolved to the destructive and dominating projects that we see today."

Today the Amah Mutsun are working to renew stewardship of their ancestral territories, including the lands of Juristac. "We want to protect Juristac so our youth can come back to this sacred place," **Chairman Lopez** continued. "We want them to learn how our ancestors have tended this landscape sustainably for hundreds of generations and understand their responsibility to fulfill this sacred obligation until the last sunrise."

Media please note: Photos of the gathering and text of resolution as adopted are available for media usage [here](#).

Campaign to Protect Juristac website: <https://protectjuristac.org>

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About the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band

The ancestors of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band are the indigenous peoples of the southern San Francisco Bay and northern Monterey Bay area. The traditional territory of the Amah Mutsun encompasses all or portions of the modern counties of San Benito, Monterey, Santa Cruz, and Santa Clara. Historically composed of more than 20 politically distinct peoples, the modern tribe represents the surviving descendant families of these historic groups. The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band currently has an enrolled membership of nearly 600 people.

About Green Foothills

Green Foothills is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting open space, farmland, and natural resources in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. Since 1962, Green Foothills has worked collaboratively to help protect nearly 185,000 acres from development, advocating on more than 900 land use issues and 60 ballot measures. Green Foothills envisions a resilient region where wildlife thrives, everyone has natural beauty to enjoy, and communities live in balance with nature. For more information, visit www.greenfoothills.org.

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