



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
Angeles District
1925 Las Virgenes Road
Calabasas, CA 91302

Lisa Ann L. Mangat, Director

March 21, 2016

Department of the Interior
Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs
Attn: Office of Federal Acknowledgement
1951 Constitution Avenue, NW
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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of Petitioner #158, the Fernandefio Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (Tribe) a sovereign group that has continued a culturally-rooted existence and maintained various community-based relationships in Northern Los Angeles County, their ancestral lands, as they pursue federal acknowledgment.

As an archaeologist working for the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR), I help manage at least two park units with cultural resources of particular importance to the Tribe at Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park and Los Encinos State Historic Park. Through consultation efforts related to various projects at the two park units, I have come to recognize the distinct historic cultural ties that members of the Tribe maintain with the history of these two parks. As a result, I have been working with several members of the Tribe on study and preservation of archaeological resources and public interpretation of Native American culture at the two parks.

In particular, with the support and encouragement of the Tribe, CDPR has recently acquired a large archaeological collection from the Encino Village site, also known as the village of *Siutcanga* (along the lineage of *Siutcabit*). Preliminary analysis of the collection suggests that the site was occupied for as long as 3,000 years. Originally excavated in 1984-85 for a development project, this collection had been stored for three decades in substandard conditions in locations far from the traditional territory of the Fernandefio Tataviam people. Rudy Ortega, Sr. and Charlie Cooke, who were important elders and leaders in the Tribe's history, became involved in the project when an ancient cemetery was discovered at the site.

We have been able to arrange for the return of the collection to be housed at Los Encinos State Historic Park, so that tribal members may easily visit, interact with, learn about, and teach us about these valuable cultural heritage materials, following the professed wishes of tribal elder and Captain, Rudy Ortega, Sr. With the assistance of

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tribal staff and local university students and faculty, we have been working on re-housing the collection in archival-quality storage, analyzing the collection to identify funerary remains, sacred items and items of cultural patrimony for repatriation to the Tribe, and planning for public museum displays to highlight the Native American heritage of the San Fernando Valley.

CDPR staff has consulted the Tribe for information on tribal history to use in public interpretive panels. This is necessary to the park story because many of the members of the Tribe are descendants of the original three grantees of the 1845 Rancho Los Encinos. Although former Spanish mission lands were originally intended to be granted to Native American neophyte families after Mexican secularization, in practice, it rarely happened and Rancho Los Encinos was an exception rather than the rule.

To be able to work with the historically-documented descendant community has been a rewarding and special experience. So often when I consult with native tribal groups in coastal southern California, I am working with people who have known native heritage, but may have lost their historical connections to specific places and villages. They can provide general cultural knowledge for the region, but it may not apply directly to the park unit where I am working. When members of the Tribe show me their great-great-great-grandfather's name on historical documents, I know that I have a direct responsibility to do what is right by managing the park's cultural resources.

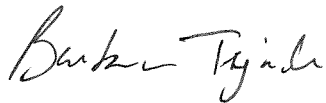
CDPR has hosted the Tribe for family gathering events at Los Encinos State Historic Park, and hopes to continue to do so in the future. It is clear from these events that members form a cohesive tribal community, with many members sharing both close and more distant family ties. They have appreciated the opportunity to gather at a place that maintains historical roots to many member families – roots that extend back to when the Portolá expedition visited the Encino village in 1769 and 1770.

The long-term effects of missionization did not weaken San Fernando Indian relations as intended, but instead, inspired their ancestors to form allies within their lineages and among local community members. To ensure cultural survival, the Tribe's progenitors retained their heritage in the privacy of their homes. The late Charlie Cooke began preservation efforts through cultural-based projects vital to the conservation of cultural resources. Meanwhile, the late Rudy Ortega Sr. became elected as Tribal President and continued integral government-to-government discourse and relationships that carry through today. The creation of the Tribe's nonprofit, Pukúu Cultural Community Services, further involved the local Los Angeles indigenous community and continues to

sponsor youth in obtaining higher education without compromising their native identity. Cousins Ortega Sr. and Cooke demonstrated that pre-Mission leadership roles transcended the assimilation pressures of the settler community and evolved to fit the needs of contemporary San Fernando Indians. They sustained traditional values, as well as cultural and physical survival.

I fully support the Tribe as they seek the federal recognition they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Tejada".

Barbara Tejada
Associate State Archaeologist
Angeles and Channel Coast Districts

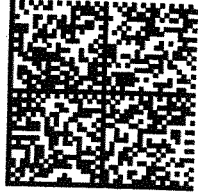
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