



October 19, 2022

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Molok Luyuk (Condor Ridge), is a magnificent ridge nestled between Indian Valley and Bear Valley in the inner coast range of Northern California. The undersigned organizations are writing to support the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation's request: that the entirety of Molok Luyuk be added to Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument through a Presidential Proclamation based on the 1906 Antiquities Act, for meaningful tribal planning, co-management and consultation, and to rename the area "Molok Luyuk."

Permanently protecting this land on both sides of the ridge will honor its cultural importance to a diverse group of California tribes, conserve its unparalleled biodiversity, fascinating geology, and vast viewsheds, and increase equitable access to the outdoors.

Since President Obama designated Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument in 2015, there have been great benefits to the land and the region including:

- An increase in visitorship
- An increase in collaborative stewardship with tribal nations and community groups
- Protection of natural wonders including distinctive geology and rare and endangered plants and animals
- [Economic benefits](#) to surrounding communities

Adding Molok Luyuk to the Monument will expand those benefits and bring them to this ecologically and culturally important landscape.

Molok Luyuk is steeped in thousands of years of rich history and is profoundly meaningful to the California Native people. Elements of the natural landscape on the ridge have traditional cultural significance and many of the plant and animal species found in this area are traditionally crucial to the lifeways of Native people.

Molok Luyuk is Patwin heartland and significant to other tribes, including the Pomo, Wappo, and Miwok. Historic trails across Molok Luyuk linked these tribes to each other and to the wider network of trade and cultural exchange throughout the region. Indigenous people from all directions came to its springs for ceremonies and healing. Plants of Molok Luyuk, such as McNab cypress, are used for food, ceremonies, tools, and medicines.

Underpinning all this is the extraordinary geology of the region, where the meeting of two tectonic plates is revealed underfoot and in the scenery. Geologists study this area to understand how tectonic plates meet and move past each other, how ancient seawater flowing through rock produces deposits of precious metals and hydrothermal springs, and to see the enormous swath of serpentinite were formed. Combined, this geological wonder tells the story of how California was assembled. The geology of the region contributed to the historic gold mining and hot springs in the area.

Molok Luyuk and the adjoining Bear Valley, whose soils are fed by the ephemeral creeks that flow from the ridge, are places of scientific and natural wonder for botanists and wildflower enthusiasts, who come to see and study its numerous rare flowers such as the endangered Indian Valley brodiaea and Colusa tidytips, wildflower displays in oak woodlands and wet meadows, and the wild bonsai-esque form of Macnab cypress. The north-south trending ridge with its numerous springs provides habitat for many species, including the endangered foothill yellow-legged frog, along with corridors for wildlife migration, critical for survival in times of climate change. In addition, adding Molok Luyuk to the Monument will increase habitat connectivity.

Given the fact that Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument is in the ancestral lands and current home of many tribes, requiring tribal co-management of the monument would break new ground in the recognition of tribal sovereignty. An expanded national monument will bring a holistic approach to the management of the area and will allow the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation and other tribes throughout the Monument to work with the BLM and US Forest Service to execute a management plan that is more effective in stewarding this natural wonder for future generations to enjoy. Provisions proposed in the legislation introduced by Representatives Garamendi and Thompson and Senators Padilla and Feinstein would ensure this collaborative stewardship.

Collaborative management between the Tribes, local, state and federal government, and community members creates an opportunity for improved fire management, including a resumption of indigenous burning practices that can regenerate aging forests, may improve carbon storage, and prevents the conversion of land from forest to grassland, and with it the resultant greenhouse emissions.

Renaming the area "Molok Luyuk" (pronounced Ma.lok/ Lue.yoke), which means "Condor Ridge" in the Patwin language, respects its cultural and natural history. Condors once flew over the ridge in abundance, and ongoing restoration efforts could allow condors to return if successful in protecting this area.

This Proclamation would also be key to meeting the goal of permanently protecting 30 percent of the nation's land and water by the year 2030, an objective that has been adopted by both federal and state administrations and would provide a model for other similar actions elsewhere.

We strongly encourage you to act soon to add this important place to our beloved National Monument.

Sincerely,

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Cc: The Honorable Debra Haaland, Secretary of Interior
Brenda Mallory, Chair, Council on Environmental Quality
The Honorable Senator Alex Padilla
The Honorable Senator Dianne Feinstein
The Honorable Representative John Garamendi
The Honorable Representative Mike Thompson