

Attachment 6a.1

We ask that the State of California and the Great Redwood Trail Agency, as an agency of the State of California, prioritize the healing of the trauma and other damage to the Wailaki communities done by the State of California. This legacy also includes the non-native people who both benefit from but also are alienated from the land and history of California by the unmet need to heal. We believe that the failure to prioritize this healing is a continuation on a smaller scale of the legacy of genocide.

In 1858 the State of California and its citizens began in earnest to war against the homelands of the Wailaki and their related neighbors (the Kinest'e, by their own naming, are "the people of the River). The government of California including the first Governor had already established that the say-so of one white man would allow the indenturing of a native person or their murder, that all Indian children could be removed from their families and enslaved "for their benefit," that a bounty could be claimed for the death of a native person. Citizens of California, a Militia funded by the state, and federal troops all participated in these attacks. By 1864 the "Bald Hills Wars" were over. The remaining community had been forced or fled to refuge, either on the Round Valley Reservation or among settler communities as "servants" or "wives."

In 1903 survey work began on a proposed route to tie the rail network of Humboldt Bay to the larger national railroads. One of the major purposes of this railroad was to allow the liquidation of the vast redwood forests that had been stewarded by Wailaki related tribes. They first converted the forests into government land then largely (and illegally) "homesteaded" them into corporate control. The railroad survey crews found highly valued household objects (baskets, grinding stones) and sacred objects (comparable to family bibles) abandoned on the ground.

Since the time of their removal (and murder) the descendants of the Wailaki and related people have not been free to return to the canyon. This area, though remote wilderness in our current view, was a bountiful homeland cared for thousands of years by native people. Many, many village sites dot the river banks and at least one settlement is so big that it would properly be called a town. The cared for land was lush and fruitful: Fish (as many as half a million salmonids annually), acorns in oak woodlands, tended pastures of bunch grasses that held the soil and wild oats for harvesting and eating (prime grazing land for profitable beef for the settlers), camas meadows (kettn in the local language). Tools, hides and basket materials, sea weed journeyed for or traded for from the coast. It is said that there is a midden as large and rich as the shell mounds of the Bay Area.

The traces of these home places need to be fully honored, not as obstructions to the intended trail, but as valued earth under the care of a re-emerging Wailaki (Kinest'e) community. The state should extend its rights of ownership of the railroad right-of-way for the public purpose of revitalizing the native community's Traditional Ecological Knowledge based understanding and care

The sacred places and objects and the ritual needs of the community should be protected and supported by the GRT Agency. Again this should be part of a primary public purpose and use.

The healing of historic loss, grief and trauma should be at the fore, in place of a third conquering of the Eel River Canyon by hikers, agencies and “partners” looking to increase the amount of landscape under our dominion.

We ask that four steps be taken:¹

- 1) Back up and rethink the priorities.
- 2) Create relationships with the Wailaki communities, organizations and Tribes as **first** partners.
- 3) Ask for process advice from the community rather than ratification of a preexisting plan.
- 4) Build a time line that accommodates native community needs.

As native and non-native citizens of Round Valley we believe that the health of our community depends on a process that is healing for our neighbors. Thank you.

¹ "We recognize that all of the native tribal people and communities within the project area (Yuki, Pomo, Cahto and Wailaki) have experienced similar issues and ask that these be fully considered by the GRTA."