

May 14, 2021

Department of the Interior
Office of the Assistant Secretary–Indian Affairs
Attn: Office of Federal Acknowledgment
1849 C Street NW, MS-4071 MIB
Washington, DC 20240

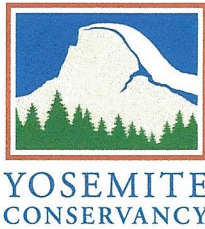
RE: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation (Petitioner #82)

To the Office of the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs:

I'm writing on behalf of Yosemite Conservancy regarding the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation's petition for Federal Acknowledgment. As the official foundation for Yosemite National Park, the Yosemite Conservancy has a long history of funding projects to preserve the park and enrich the visitor experience. In accordance with U.S. law and policy, many of these grants to the National Park Service (NPS) require Federal consultation with Native American tribal representatives. Together with the NPS, we regularly work with the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation on a variety of projects and services in Yosemite National Park, including these recent examples:

- **Project consultations:** In collaboration with the Conservancy and the National Park Service, representatives from the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation and other Yosemite-area tribes share their expertise to conduct project site visits, to review designs and plans, and to ensure any unearthed artifacts are handled properly. For example, their input helps guide decisions about avoiding sensitive areas, protecting culturally important plants and trees, and incorporating traditional ecological knowledge into restoration work.
- **Exhibit content:** In collaboration with the Conservancy and the NPS, representatives from the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation and other Yosemite-area tribes review and provide input on many public-facing exhibits, such as the educational signs developed for the \$40M overall restoration of the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias. They contribute stories and content, and help ensure the tribes' perspectives are well-represented, deeply enriching the educational value for visitors.
- **Wahhoga Indian Cultural Center:** The long-term project to create an Indian Cultural Center at the Wahhoga site in Yosemite Valley has been driven primarily by members of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation. The Conservancy has provided financial support for this project, which is managed by the Wahhoga Committee and the NPS. Initial work has included building umachas and a traditional roundhouse on the site.
- **Black oak restoration:** Members of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation are working with the NPS on a current Conservancy-funded project to restore black oak groves in Yosemite Valley, drawing on traditional knowledge to save a culturally and ecologically important tree population.

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- **“Voices of the People”:** The Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation contributed extensive background information, writing, and editing support for this Conservancy-published book, which features histories and contemporary perspectives from the seven Yosemite-area tribes. The book was published in 2019 as State Historic Preservation Office mandated mitigation for the renovation of an historic NPS building that was constructed over a Southern Sierra Miwuk village and burial site nearly a century ago.
- **The Yosemite Museum Store:** The store, which operates online and in a physical location as part of the Yosemite Museum in Yosemite Valley, features baskets, jewelry and other Native American crafts and artwork, many of them connected to the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation. The Conservancy employee who runs the store is of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, and uses the store in part as a way to share knowledge and inspire appreciation for traditional basketry.

I am sharing this short list of activities as an example of some of the many ways the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation holds deep and continuing genealogical and cultural ties to Yosemite and the surrounding area, and of their ongoing involvement in important restoration projects, educational outreach and other work in Yosemite National Park. Yosemite Conservancy and the National Park Service understand the Southern Sierra Miwuk community and culture are still with us today and we engage with them regularly. I urge you to reconsider the Proposed Finding regarding their request for Federal Acknowledgment at your earliest convenience.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Dean". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Frank Dean
President & CEO

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