



March 19, 2024

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: Proceedings on Remand in *Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians v. United States*
Department of the Interior

Dear Secretary Haaland:

I write on behalf of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation to follow up on my November 28, 2023, letter requesting your assistance in establishing a fair and transparent process for further proceedings in the above-referenced matter.

We understand the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians may be seeking a restored lands determination for property in the Bay Area city of Vallejo – more than 90 miles from Scotts Valley’s rural homeland northwest of Clear Lake, but squarely within the ancestral lands of our Patwin people.

As we have previously explained, Vallejo is the documented location of the Patwin village of *Aguasto*. The California Native American Heritage Commission has designated Yocha Dehe as the most likely descendant of Native American remains found in Vallejo and surrounding areas of Solano County (itself named for a Patwin leader). And Yocha Dehe, along with a sister Patwin tribe, holds a cultural easement protecting tribal cultural resources in Vallejo parks and recognizing the area as Patwin ancestral lands.

In contrast, there is no documentary evidence of any Scotts Valley villages, burial grounds, occupancy, or subsistence use at or in the vicinity of the Vallejo land.

In light of the controversy surrounding Scotts Valley’s request – including opposition from multiple California tribal governments who wish to be heard – our November 28 letter requested the Department of the Interior establish a fair, transparent, and fact-based process for any decision-making that may occur on remand. At minimum, such a process must provide Yocha Dehe and other interested tribes with any materials on which Scotts Valley proposes to

Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation

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rely, as well as a meaningful opportunity to respond. This is particularly important in the context of the “significant historical connection” requirement (25 C.F.R. §§ 292.2 and 292.12) which requires detailed evidentiary analysis and squarely implicates the unique evidence and expertise of our Patwin people, who have used, occupied, and protected the cultural resources of Vallejo and surrounding areas for countless generations. To date, we have not received any confirmation or other response to our November 28, 2023, request.

To be clear, Yocha Dehe does not mean to suggest the remand process should be rushed forward. On the contrary, any decision-making on a matter of such importance to multiple tribes must be careful and deliberate, with ample opportunity for robust tribal input before any Indian Lands Opinion is prepared. Anything less would be inconsistent with the Administrative Procedure Act and, more fundamentally, the trust relationship.

If the Department intends to consider any Scotts Valley restored lands request on remand (whether framed as a new request or reconsideration of a prior request), Yocha Dehe must have a meaningful opportunity to participate in a fair, transparent, and fact-based decision-making process. We respectfully request that you confirm Yocha Dehe will have such an opportunity, and we trust no decision-making will occur in the meantime.

Thank you for considering Yocha Dehe’s position and request in this critically important matter. We look forward to your reply.

Wile bo,



Anthony Roberts
Tribal Chairman

cc: Hon. Alex Padilla, United States Senator
Hon. Laphonza Butler, United States Senator
Hon. Mike Thompson, United States Representative
Hon. John Garamendi, United States Representative
Laura Daniel-Davis, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of the Interior
Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior
Robert Anderson, Solicitor, Department of the Interior
Wizipan Garriott, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior