



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

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Midpen approves agreement with Amah Mutsun Tribal Band for natural resource and cultural conservation at Mount Umunhum

Los Altos, CA— The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District’s board of directors unanimously approved a cultural conservation easement over 36 acres atop Mount Umunhum with the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band at a special public meeting December 13.

The easement grants the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, made up of descendants of indigenous people taken to Missions San Juan Bautista and Santa Cruz, permanent rights to help steward the mountaintop for natural resource conservation, cultural relearning and public education in partnership with Midpen. Mount Umunhum is a sacred site to the Amah Mutsun people and is central to their creation story.

“We view the Conservation Easement as a unique opportunity, and a responsibility, to help reconnect the Amah Mutsun people with their culture. That connection, to their culture and the land that supported it, was severed centuries ago,” said Midpen General Manager Steve Abbors. “We are in a small way helping to reestablish that connection and the permanence of the conservation easement makes that connection truly meaningful. At the same time, it supports Midpen’s mission by enhancing our ability to restore and preserve the natural environment at Mt. Umunhum for the public and provide a new and richer experience for the preserve visitors by directly sharing traditional culture and ecological knowledge with the original inhabitants of the mountain.”

“We have been separated from this sacred mountain for generations,” said Amah Mutsun Chairman Valentin Lopez. “This guarantees our people the opportunity to return to Mount Umunhum and to restore our cultural relationship with the place of our creation story.”

In exchange for the benefits to the Tribe under the easement, the Tribe will provide significant volunteer educational, cultural and natural resource advising services to the District and the public, as well as the more general public benefits of deepening the region's understanding of this aspect of human history on Mount Umunhum and surrounding areas.

Tribal activities will be coordinated with Midpen in alignment with its policies and mission, and could include the creation of a native plant garden, use of indigenous plant management techniques, tribal ceremonies and public education. The easement prohibits developing new or existing or buildings for commercial purposes, including expanding or occupying the radar tower. It does not affect existing recreation at Mount Umunhum, which opened in September after the completion of an eight year, \$25 million restoration and public access project, nor does it inhibit any future expanded open space recreational uses, improvements or public access.

Conservation easements are commonly used by Midpen and other organizations as a tool for protecting and managing natural open spaces. The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band also partners with many other regional public agencies, nonprofits and educational institutions including Pinnacles National Park, California State Parks, Sempervirens Fund and the University of California.

More information about this item can be found at www.openspace.org/cultural-conservation-easement

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*Created by voter initiative in 1972, the **Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District** has successfully protected more than 63,000 acres of open space. The District is a California special district governed by an elected board of directors. The District's mission is to acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land and agricultural land of regional significance in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment, and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education.*

www.openspace.org

*The **Amah Mutsun Tribal Band** (AMTB), is a California Native American Tribe comprised of nearly 600 members, each of whom can trace their descent directly to a Mission San Juan Bautista Indian and/or a Mission Santa Cruz Indian. AMTB is on the Native American Heritage Commission's contact list as a California Native American Tribe.*

amahmutsun.org