anahata
5031 Highway 140
Mariposa, CA 95338

May 17, 2021

Department of the Interior
Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs
Attn: Office of Federal Acknowledgement
Bryan Newland, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs
1849 C Street NW, MS-4071 MIB
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Petition of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation for Federal Acknowledgment (Petitioner #82)

Dear Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Newland,

We at Anahata, a fair trade retail store in Mariposa, CA, hereby express our heartfelt support for federal acknowledgement of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation. We recognize and honor the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation (SSMN) as a political and tribal community. Thousands of years after they first began to inhabit Yosemite Valley and its environs, the people of the SSMN are fighting to secure the rights promised to their ancestors in treaties made with the United States government in 1851.

On November 16, 2018, a Proposed Finding Against Acknowledgement of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation was issued by the Office of the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs. This Proposed Finding (PF) dismisses the entire application for federal acknowledgement based on the claim that the SSMN lacks sufficient evidence of present-day cohesiveness as a distinct Native community. As members of the broader Mariposa County community, we strongly contest this claim.

For the sake of brevity, we will address just one specious aspect of the Proposed Finding. Throughout the section "SUMMARY UNDER THE CRITERION", the PF implies that the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation's tribal activities don't "count" if non-Natives and Natives from other tribes are included. On the contrary, we experience the inclusive spirit of the SSMN as a key strength in their unique tribal identity. The present-day bridge-building, stewardship, and educational efforts of the SSMN contribute immeasurably to our local community. More importantly, we understand that relationships with other Native groups and with non-Natives have long been crucial to the survival of the SSMN and their culture.

Amanda Ehler, founder & owner of Anahata, moved to Yosemite Valley in 2006. She and her family have been blessed to attend numerous traditional practices and celebrations held by the SSMN. These traditions, which honor this unique and precious natural area, have deepened our respect and care for the environment, tribal culture, and all people. The SSMN's active, present-day efforts to sustain and share their cultural inheritance humble us and enrich our connection to this place. Their access to Yosemite Valley for traditional tribal activities must be formally recognized and protected.

Mr. Newland, you have the power to correct a 171-year old injustice. We urge you to reject the aforementioned Proposed Finding. Please review the application for federal recognition of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation. If you've never visited Yosemite, we encourage you to come and experience its medicine for yourself. Written deep in the bedrock mortars you will see, as we do, that this place and its people are one.

Thank you for your careful consideration in this matter.

Yours most sincerely,

Amanda Rose Ehler
Ella Rose Neogy
Denita Hightman
AnnaRebecca Crary

cc. Sandra Chapman, chairperson, Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation

SANTA ROSA RANCHERIA TACHI YOKUT TRIBE

May 19, 2021

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

Dear Acting Assistant Secretary:

On behalf of the Tachi Yokut Tribe, known as the Santa Rosa Indian Community of the Santa Rosa Rancheria, California ("Tachi"), a federally recognized Indian tribe, 86 Fed. Reg. 7554, 7557 (Jan. 29, 2021), I am writing in support of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation's ("Tribe") petition for federal acknowledgment.

The Proposed Finding issued against recognition is flawed in that it only evaluated one portion of one of the seven mandatory criteria, 83.7(b) which requires "[a] predominant portion of the petitioning group comprises a distinct community and has existed as a community[1] from historical times until the present" (hereinafter referred to as the "community criterion"). In assessing the community criterion, the AS-IA evaluated only the Tribe's modern period of community from 1982-2011 to ultimately find it lacking. A thorough evaluation of the rest of the community criterion and the other six criteria would have afforded Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs with information and background to enhance its evaluation of the modern community criterion. Without a full understanding of the Tribe's historical community, politics, culture and descent therefrom, the AS-IA cannot adequately understand the Tribe's modern community; there is no doubt each and every tribes' current existence is critically connected to its tribal history. Tribal community history is the foundation of each tribe's current make-up, which is why it is required to be taken into consideration by the Department of Interior.

It is important to Tachi and all Native American communities that the Department of Interior not bypass a thorough examination of the historical evidence of community before rejecting an application for acknowledgement based on lack of modern community evidence. Tachi believes

[1] The 1994 Regulations define "community" to mean "any group of people which can demonstrate that consistent interactions and significant social relationships exist within its membership and that its members are differentiated from and identified as distinct from nonmembers. *Community* must be understood in the context of the history, geography, culture and social organization of the group."

16835 Alkali Dr. | P.O. Box 8 | Lemoore, CA 93245 | 559.924.1278 | Fax 559.925.2931
Tax Exempt #94-2344086

the Department of Interior should review not only any newly submitted evidence but also all prior historical evidence submitted by the Tribe prior to the Proposed Finding being issued. Tachi supports a uniform recognition process in which all tribes are held to the same standard and requests the Proposed Finding, and the remaining six criteria, be thoroughly reviewed and analyzed before issuance of a Final Determination.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter and please reach out if you should wish to further discuss.

Sincerely,

Robert Jeff II
Vice Chairman

OUTWARD BOUND
CALIFORNIA

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

I am writing to to advocate that Petitioner #82: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, CA receive federal recognition as a sovereign nation. The Southern Sierra Miwuk people made their home in this area before Mariposa County was created (1850) and remain an active and important tribal community within the County.

As a resident of Mariposa County and employee of Outward Bound California, I utilize the ancestral homelands of the Miwuk and Western Mono peoples in what is now Yosemite, the John Muir and Ansel Adams Wilderness, and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park. Our basecamp in Midpines, CA is on land stolen from the Southern Sierra Miwuk. I want to honor this land formally with the members of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation.

I respectfully ask you and the United States government finally recognize and acknowledge Petitioner #82: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation (SSMN) as a federally recognized Indian Tribe. Aldo E. Salerno, Ph.D, was an historian with the Office of Federal Acknowledgement at the U.S. Department of the Interior from 2001 to 2017. Dr. Salerno and staff reached majority affirmative conclusions on all seven of the mandatory criteria for Federal Recognition, including previous Federal recognition by the US government through the US Park Service. The Southern Sierra Miwuk people are still here in Mariposa county and deserve the recognition they have been seeking.

(This is a follow up letter from the one I submitted last summer.)

Sincerely,

Jeremy Robertson

Outward Bound: Changing Lives Through Challenge and Discovery.
6617 HWY 140, Midpines, CA 95345
www.outwardboundcalifornia.org

OUTWARD BOUND
CALIFORNIA

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Sincerely,
Heather Smallpage

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OUTWARD BOUND
CALIFORNIA

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I am writing to share my opinion and hope that you would reconsider your "Proposed Finding Against Federal Acknowledgment" concerning Petitioner #82: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, CA. The Southern Sierra Miwuk people made their home in this area before Mariposa County was created (1850) and remain an active and important tribal community within the County.

I was troubled to learn that a Proposed Finding issued by the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs on November 16, 2018 would, if not reversed, deny the Tribe acknowledgement as a federally recognized tribe. The Assistant Secretary has proposed a finding that the Tribe does not constitute a distinct Indian community "at present", which local residents know to be inaccurate. We recognize and value the distinct cultural practices and values the Tribe brings to our region. I am also concerned that the Tribe is being treated unfairly in the acknowledgment process. For example, the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) has failed to respond to the Tribe's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for documents related to their own petition over a year ago on May 7, 2019.

I respectfully ask you and the United States government finally recognize and acknowledge Petitioner #82: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation (SSM) as a federally recognized Indian Tribe. Aldo E. Salerno, Ph.D, was an historian with the Office of Federal Acknowledgement at the U.S. Department of the Interior from 2001 to 2017. Dr. Salerno and staff reached majority affirmative conclusions on all seven of the mandatory criteria for Federal Recognition, including previous Federal recognition by the US government through the US Park Service.
Your November 16, 2018 finding seems to suggest that the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation is a new tribe that "evolved" out of the "American Indian Council of Mariposa Co." Sylvia M. Broadbent published a dictionary called "The Southern Sierra Miwok Language" in 1964 that pre-dates this supposed evolution out of the AICMC. A.L. Kroeber in "Handbook of Indians of California" (1919) identifies the Southern Miwok and places their territory and villages in the Mariposa and Yosemite region 100 years ago.

Villages like Kasumati and Nochu-chi in the area of what is now called Mariposa. The village of Awani was noted in Yosemite Valley, and Sotpok near where the South forks joins the Merced River. It is clear that the Southern Sierra Miwuk have existed in the area far longer than 1970, reaching back to beyond the US government's own birth and records on the matter. The Southern Sierra Miwuk people are still here in Mariposa county and deserve the recognition they have been seeking.

Sincerely,

Caroline Steadman

Caroline Steadman

OUTWARD BOUND
CALIFORNIA

Department of the Interior
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As a resident of Mariposa County and employee of Outward Bound California, I utilize the ancestral homelands of the Miwuk and Western Mono peoples in what is now Yosemite, the John Muir and Ansel Adams Wilderness, and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park. Our basecamp in Midpines, CA is on land stolen from the Southern Sierra Miwuk. I want to honor this land formally with the members of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation.

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Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Hoesauf, Program Manager

Outward Bound: Changing Lives Through Challenge and Discovery.
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Sincerely,

5.15.21

(Christopher Keys)

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CALIFORNIA

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Sincerely,

Charlotte Tomlinson

(Charlotte Tomlinson)

OUTWARD BOUND
CALIFORNIA

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Office of the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs
Attn: Office of Federal Acknowledgment
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Sincerely,

Joseph Russ

Outward Bound: Changing Lives Through Challenge and Discovery.
The Presidio – PO Box 29632, San Francisco, CA 94129 | 415.933.6222 |
www.outwardboundcalifornia.org

OUTWARD BOUND
CALIFORNIA

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

Dear Tara Katuk Mac Lean Sweeney,

I am writing to share my opinion and hope that you would reconsider your "Proposed Finding Against Federal Acknowledgment" concerning Petitioner #82: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, CA.

I have been a resident of Mariposa County for the last five years as an employee of Outward Bound California. Outward Bound is a character building non-profit that takes students on wilderness expeditions in the Sierra. We utilize the ancestral homelands of the Miwuk and Western Mono peoples in what is now Yosemite, the John Muir and Ansel Adams Wilderness, and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park. Our basecamp in Midpines, CA is on land stolen from the Southern Sierra Miwuk.

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Sincerely,
Erin Thacher
PO Box 150
Midpines, CA 95345

OUTWARD BOUND
CALIFORNIA

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

Dear Tara Katuk Mac Lean Sweeney,
I am writing to share my opinion and hope that you would reconsider your decisions concerning Petitioner #82: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, CA.
I am a resident of Mariposa County. I first lived in Yosemite Valley in the summer of 2003 when I worked up there in some months off from college. I returned to the area in 2009 through work with Outward Bound in the High Sierra. Outward Bound is a character-building non-profit that takes students on wilderness expeditions. We utilize the ancestral homelands of the Miwuk and Mono peoples in what is now Yosemite, the John Muir and Ansel Adams Wilderness, and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park. Our basecamp is in Midpines, CA is on land stolen from the Southern Sierra Miwuk. I am now the Program Director of Outward Bound California in the High Sierra.

I respectfully ask you and the United States government to finally recognize and acknowledge Petitioner #82: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation (SSM) as a federally recognized Indian Tribe. Aldo E. Salerno, Ph.D, was an historian with the Office of Federal Acknowledgment at the U.S. Department of the Interior from 2001 to 2017. Dr. Salerno and staff reached majority affirmative conclusions on all seven of the mandatory criteria for Federal Recognition, including previous Federal recognition by the US government through the US Park Service.
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Jason Schmidt
High Sierra Program Director
PO Box 150
Midpines, CA 95345

Peter Smith

3863 E Kerckhoff Ave

Fresno, CA 93702

15 July 2021

Via email to Kristina_Solberg@feinstein.senate.gov
Senator Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Via Email to Brittany_Carmon@harris.senate.gov
Senator Kamala Harris
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Petition of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation for Federal Acknowledgment

Dear Senators Feinstein and Harris:

I am writing, as a local resident, to express my support for the federal acknowledgment of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation ("Tribe"), a distinct Indian community within Mariposa County. The Southern Sierra Miwuk people made their home in this area before Mariposa County was created (1850) and remain an active and important tribal community within the County.

I was troubled to learn that a Proposed Finding issued by the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs on November 16, 2018 would, if not reversed, deny the Tribe acknowledgment as a federally recognized tribe. The Assistant Secretary has proposed a finding that the Tribe does not constitute a distinct Indian community "at present", which local residents know to be inaccurate. We recognize and value the distinct cultural practices and values the Tribe brings to our region. I am also concerned that the Tribe is being treated unfairly in the acknowledgment process. For example, the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) has failed to respond to the Tribe's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for documents related to their own petition, even though the request was made almost a year ago, on May 7, 2019. Because of the Government's failure to respond to the Tribe's FOIA request, and because the Tribe's ability to prepare a response will be severely restricted by recent measures implemented to address the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tribe was compelled to request an extension of time to file its response to the Proposed Finding.

I am respectfully asking that you contact the OFA and express your support for the immediate provision of the documents the Tribe has requested under FOIA, and that you also support the Tribe's request for a 180-day extension of the current deadline for the Tribe to file its response to the Proposed Finding.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

cc. William Leonard, Chairman, Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation

Jaelyn Blonder
21234 Providencia St., Woodland Hills, CA, 91364

August 1, 2021

Via email to Matt.Reed@email.house.gov

The Honorable Tom McClintock
U.S. House of Representatives
2312 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515

Re: Petition of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation for Federal Acknowledgment

Dear Congressman McClintock:

I am writing, as a California resident, to express my support for the federal acknowledgment of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation ("Tribe"), a distinct Indian community within Mariposa County. The Southern Sierra Miwuk people made their home in this area before Mariposa County was created (1850) and remain an active and important tribal community within the County.

I was troubled to learn that a Proposed Finding issued by the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs on November 16, 2018 would, if not reversed, deny the Tribe acknowledgment as a federally recognized tribe. The Assistant Secretary has proposed a finding that the Tribe does not constitute a distinct Indian community "at present", which local residents know to be inaccurate. We recognize and value the distinct cultural practices and values the Tribe brings to our region. I am also concerned that the Tribe is being treated unfairly in the acknowledgment process. For example, the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) has failed to respond to the Tribe's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for documents related to their own petition, even though the request was made over two years ago, on May 7, 2019.

I am respectfully asking that you contact the OFA and express your support for the immediate provision of the documents the Tribe has requested under FOIA. Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Jaelyn Blonder

Jaelyn Blonder
21234 Providencia St., Woodland Hills, CA, 91364

August 1, 2021

Via email to Kristina_Solberg@feinstein.senate.gov

Senator Dianne Feinstein

United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Petition of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation for Federal Acknowledgment

Dear Senator Feinstein,

I am writing, as a local resident, to express my support for the federal acknowledgment of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation ("Tribe"), a distinct Indian community within Mariposa County. The Southern Sierra Miwuk people made their home in this area before Mariposa County was created (1850) and remain an active and important tribal community within the County.

I was troubled to learn that a Proposed Finding issued by the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs on November 16, 2018 would, if not reversed, deny the Tribe acknowledgment as a federally recognized tribe. The Assistant Secretary has proposed a finding that the Tribe does not constitute a distinct Indian community "at present", which local residents know to be inaccurate. We recognize and value the distinct cultural practices and values the Tribe brings to our region. I am also concerned that the Tribe is being treated unfairly in the acknowledgment process. For example, the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) has failed to respond to the Tribe's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for documents related to their own petition, even though the request was made over two years ago, on May 7, 2019.

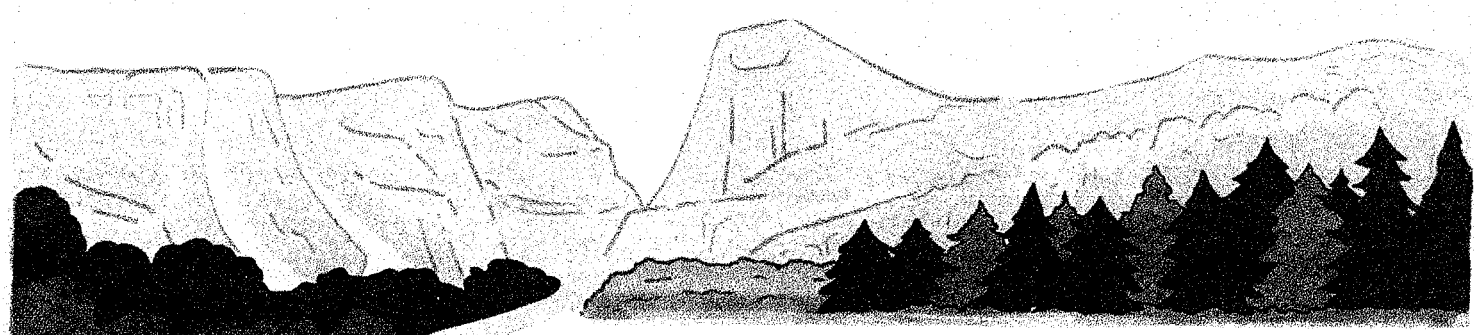
I am respectfully asking that you contact the OFA and express your support for the immediate provision of the documents the Tribe has requested under FOIA. Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

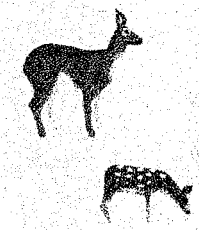
Jaelyn Blonder

CC: **ssmiwuknation@gmail.com**



RESTORE HETCH HETCHY

Yosemite National Park



3286 Adeline St. Suite 7
Berkeley, California 94703
510.893.3400

November 16, 2021

Mr. Bryan Newland
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs
1849 C Street, NW, MS-4071 MIB
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: **Urgent Action Needed – Prior to November 17** for Petitioner #82 the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, CA for Federal Acknowledgment

Dear Assistant Secretary Newland:

Restore Hetch Hetchy supports federal acknowledgment of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation ("Tribe"), a distinct Indian community within Mariposa County. The Southern Sierra Miwuk people made their home in this area long before Mariposa County was created and remain an active and important tribal community within the county and the region.

It is troubling to learn that a Proposed Finding issued by the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs on November 16, 2018 would, if not reversed, deny the Tribe acknowledgment as a federally recognized tribe. This finding indicated the Tribe does not constitute a distinct Indian community "at present", something local residents, as well as the National Park Service, know to be wholly inaccurate. The Tribe brings distinct cultural practices and values to the local community. In addition, the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation has every right to engage as a federally recognized tribe to help determine a more inclusive future of Yosemite National Park, including potential restoration of Hetch Hetchy Valley.

Assistant Secretary Newland
Re: Urgent Action Needed – Prior to November 17 for Petitioner #82 the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, CA for Federal Acknowledgment
November 16, 2021

I respectfully ask that you give every possible consideration to the Tribe's nearly 40-year effort seeking self-determination, self-governance, and acknowledgment through the federal recognition process. This long overdue designation will allow the Tribe to acquire its tribal sovereignty rights, and permit tribal members to pursue health benefits, scholarships for higher education, and other funding opportunities to support their wellbeing and cultural continuance.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter that is so critical to the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation.

Sincerely,

Spreck Rosekrans
Executive Director

Cc:

Sandra Chapman, Chairperson, Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation
Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior
Lee Fleming, Director, Office of Federal Acknowledgement
Senator Alex Padilla
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Rep. Tom McClintock (4th District, CA)
Rep. Raul Grijalva, Chairman, House Natural Resources Committee
Rep. Teresa Leger Hernandez, Chair, House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples of the United States
Rep. Ruben Gallego, House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples of the United States
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors
Sierra Club, Tehipite Chapter
Denise A. Sahatdjian, Office of Senator Feinstein

205 E Waring Ave
State College, PA 16801

16 November 2021

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

Re: Petition of the Southern Sierra Miwok for Federal Acknowledgment

Dear Secretary Haaland,

I am a faculty member at The Pennsylvania State University. I am also one of only a handful of women who have completed the Sierra High Route alone—an experience that has led me to write a manuscript (publication forthcoming) about the Sierra Nevada mountains.

I begin with this context because I am not a legal resident of California, nor a person of Indigenous descent. Instead, I am among the four million or so people who visit Yosemite National Park and its environs for recreation. We can't claim ancestry or residency, but we can fall in love with the area as tourists. We can become curious enough about it to look into its natural and human histories and the ways they intertwine.

For well over a century, we—the tourists, the recreationists—have been able to enjoy the Sierra Nevada mountains, and especially Yosemite National Park, in the context of an uncomplicated view of the National Parks. It's a comfortable narrative I imagine you know well: John Muir, preservation, public lands, "America's Best Idea."

That is changing, and it should. The violence against the Native people of what we now call California is interwoven tightly with public lands, including what we now call Yosemite Valley. The more clearly we see those strands, the more absurd, ironic, and brutal the specific federal response to Petitioner #82, the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, in November 2018 appears.

In brief: the U.S. federal government proposes to decline to acknowledge the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation on the basis of Criterion 83.7(b), which requires that "[a] predominant portion of the petitioning group comprises a distinct community and has existed as a community from historical times until the present." But on what basis does the Proposed Finding disagree with the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation's assertion that it is a distinct community?

The Proposed Finding uses several techniques to invalidate the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation that are consistent with the long history of injustice toward and manipulation of Native people, including: fixating on explicable particularities that are inconsistent with the letter of U.S. law (such as the evolution of "American Indian Council of Mariposa Co." into the "Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation," page 4); relying on unjust treaties and flawed censuses documented during a genocidal campaign against Indigenous

people (pages 8-10); and valuing the assertions of non-Indigenous anthropologists working over a century ago more than Indigenous peoples' own knowledge about themselves and their culture (pages 6-7).

These are all perfectly legal strategies. They are also ethically wrong. They do not emerge from any impulse to offer respect, honor, or dignity to Indigenous people. They emerge from the impulse to deny, to gatekeep, and to continue reaping the benefits of violent land theft that still brings our government profit. They are paternalistic. And in the context of this specific place—Yosemite Valley—they are incommensurate with the concrete realities that have shaped the past and present of this place, and will continue to shape its future.

As you evaluate the Proposed Finding, please consider that between 1846 and 1873, in the years of the Gold Rush, an estimated 80 percent of the Indigenous people in California died. Again: 80 percent of the Indigenous people in California died. Please consider that their deaths were not accidental. As scholar Benjamin Madley reports, "the organized destruction of California's Indian peoples under US rule was not a closely guarded secret. Mid-nineteenth century California newspapers frequently addressed, and often encouraged, what we would now call genocide."

Please consider the ethnohistory included in Petition #82 (pages 2-4), which details how the victims of this genocidal, federally-approved campaign endured, gathered in Yosemite Valley, and (despite continued humiliation from the Park Service) worked to sustain their ancestral lands and practices.

With this historical context in mind, consider the Proposed Finding's many dismissals, including this one (page 6): "The petitioner's 1984 narrative claims that the petitioner evolved as a 'Southern Sierra Miwuk' Indian Tribe that existed in 'Yosemite National Park and its environs' at the time of first sustained contact. In contrast, the Department found evidence of numerous political entities organized as sovereign interdependent bands in 1851."

The implication of the Proposed Finding is that the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, despite maintaining traditions, community, story, and relationship with their ancestral homeland in the face of sustained genocidal pressure and government dismissal, is not *pure* enough for the federal government to acknowledge its existence.

Again, I am not a Native person. But as a U.S. citizen and a person who values the Sierra Nevada landscape enough to educate myself and others about it, I read the Proposed Finding with deep shame and anger—knowing it is not only unjust, but also further perpetuates a long injustice.

Acknowledging the sovereignty of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation is within your power. Please examine the evidence the SSMN has presented in the context of the specific history of this place, and let that frame your approach to the petition for federal acknowledgment.

Sincerely,

Talley V. Kayser
The Pennsylvania State University

205 E Waring Ave
State College, PA 16801

16 November 2021

Bryan Newland
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W. MS-4660-MIB
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Petition of the Southern Sierra Miwok for Federal Acknowledgment

Dear Secretary Newland,

I am a faculty member at The Pennsylvania State University. I am also one of only a handful of women who have completed the Sierra High Route alone—an experience that has led me to write a manuscript (publication forthcoming) about the Sierra Nevada mountains.

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Acknowledging the sovereignty of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation is within your power. Please examine the evidence the SSMN has presented in the context of the specific history of this place, and let that frame your approach to the petition for federal acknowledgment.

Sincerely,

Talley V. Kayser
The Pennsylvania State University

9746A Buckeye Road
PO Box 181
El Portal, CA 95318

November 25th, 2021

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

Re: Petition of the Southern Sierra Miwok for Federal Acknowledgment (Petitioner #82)

Dear Secretary Haaland,

I am an National Park Service (NPS) ecologist working in Yosemite National Park, a California state resident, and non-Native person currently living and working on Southern Miwok Nation's (SSMN) Ancestral lands. My work is about restoring the health of ecosystems, creating and maintaining connections between physical and biological landscapes, ecosystems and people. I am writing to express my greatest support for the SSMN to be recognized federally as an Indian tribe, and to dispute the Statement of Findings (SOF) that denies them this right.

If not for the thousands of years that the SSMN people have tended to the land, stewarding their needs of the plants and animals, and fostering the reciprocal relationships that are required for healthy ecosystems, Yosemite would not be what it is today. They hold thousands of years of knowledge, experience, and spirituality of Yosemite Valley. The health and beauty of Yosemite would not be possible without SSMN presence, yet the NPS in 1905 destroyed the Miwuk village at the base of Yosemite Falls to construct a soldiers' camp and demonstrated through other actions that the Indians did not fit within the Park Service's vision of a "wilderness experience".The truth is wilderness as defined by the white settlers colonizers does not have human presence, but there has been a human presence for thousands of years. This removal was unethical, irresponsible, immoral, and as Nation we must move to build back better for America. It is necessary and just to restore and maintain the reciprocal relationships they have with their lands, their culture, and this place. With the overwhelming amount of evidence presented in SSMN Case for Federal RecognitionPetition #82, as well as the plethora of resources in the Yosemite Archives of their presence in Yosemite Valley, it is blasphemous to deny their rightful acknowledgement as an Indian tribe.

> *"The evidence submitted by Petitioner #82, and evidence Department staff obtained through its verification and evaluation research, are insufficient to demonstrate that Petitioner #82 meets the criterion found at 25 C.F.R. § 83.7(b) (criterion 83.7(b)), one of the seven mandatory criteria of the regulations for a determination that the petitioning group is an Indian tribe. Criterion 83.7(b) requires that "[a] predominant portion of the petitioning group comprises a distinct community and has existed as a community from historical times until the present." In accordance with the regulations, the failure to meet all seven criteria requires a determination that the petitioning group is not an Indian tribe within the meaning of Federal law.3 Therefore, the Department proposes to decline to acknowledge Petitioner #82 as an Indian tribe."*

The SOF decision excludes considering that since the SSMN have been separated from their land as per the forced removal of the Mariposa Battalion, it would make it harder to practice their culture as a 'distinct community from historical times to present'. Relocation and removal of resources will do that to any group of people, and as people need to survive they find themselves in different places. This fragmentation is a result of the forced removal of the SSMN from their land by the government, as they have continued to maintain traditions, community, story, and relationship with their ancestral homeland in the face of sustained genocidal pressure and government dismissal. Additionally, Yosemite NP recognizes SSMN as a tribe and a partner, other Yosemite associated tribes recognise SSMN as such, and only those who live within and around a group of people can truly define what a community looks like.

As climate change marches on, we must restore ecosystems that are intimately connected to the people who tended these lands, as the Indigenous knowledge of the SSMN people should be leading the physical and cultural healing necessary for years to come. It is within your power to start the restoration of justice by granting the federal recognition and all the rights within, to the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation as an Indian Tribe.

Respectfully yours,

Anna L. Puchkoff
Ecologist, Yosemite National Park

Dec. 6, 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

Jake Jaramillo
1321 Seneca Street
#2004
Seattle, WA 98101

Reference Petitioner #82: Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, CA.

To whom it may concern:

I am writing from my experience as co-Chair of the Knapsack subcommittee of Sierra Club National Outings. Each year, our volunteer leaders take more than two dozen backpacking groups into the Sierra Nevada backcountry, encouraging roughly 300 participants to "Enjoy, explore and protect the planet." We bring dozens of people into the environs of Yosemite National Park annually.

We are aware that the creation and development of Yosemite National Park is predicated on the eviction of the Southern Sierra Miwuk and several other Indigenous groups who lived in intimate connection with it long before it was designated a National Park. Our mission, to "Explore, enjoy and protect the planet," encompasses support for a vital Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation and its enduring role in Yosemite's own vitality.

The Southern Sierra Miwuk have been on a decades-long quest to gain tribal acknowledgement from the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA). At the same time, as described by the Superintendent of Yosemite National Park in his December 18, 2019 letter to OFA, they have been instrumental in consulting with the Park on its Management Plans and Environmental Impact Statements. They have, as the Superintendent says, brought the *"unique interests and views of their distinct Indian community, whose ancestral ties to Yosemite National Park have spanned multiple generations...which are reflected in the traditions, cultural values and spiritual beliefs and practices of their community."*

I am cognizant that Tribal Acknowledgment brings many benefits, including government-to-government status that would enhance the Southern Sierra Miwuk's role in the management of Yosemite National Park. I support Tribal Acknowledgment of the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation so it can more fully realize its cultural connections to its home in Yosemite, and better engage its role in protecting the Park going forward.

Sincerely,

Jake Jaramillo

13 December 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: Petitioner #82: Southern Miwuk Nation, CA

To Whom it May Concern;

This letter is in response to the Proposed Finding against Acknowledgment of the Southern Sierra Miwok Nation, dated the 16th of November 2018. I am writing to strongly encourage the Office of Indian Affairs to immediately withdraw this Proposed Finding and recommence Active Consideration of the Southern Sierra Miwok Nation's petition under the standard for unambiguous federal recognition.

As a California-born, non-Indigenous person, I have grown a deep connection to the traditional and current homelands of the Southern Sierra Miwok including what we now call the Yosemite Valley. Over the past 15 years it has been my great fortune to get to know some members of the Southern Sierra Miwok Tribe. In that time, I have born witness to the cohesion of their tribe as well as their adhesion to their traditions, cultural and lands.

As a Cultural Anthropologist and Restoration Ecologist, I have also come to understand the violence against the Indigenous people of what we now call California is tightly interwoven with the original inception and ongoing management of our public lands, particularly our National Park system.

It is through these personal and professional lenses that I read the Office of Federal Acknowledgement's Proposed Finding to Petitioner #82, the Southern Sierra Miwok Nation, with a mix of shame, anger and heartbreak.

The finding solely considered the community criterion (83.7(b)) over the modern period from 1982 to 2011. This appears to violate the 2015 Final Rule regarding revisions to the 25 CFR Part 83 acknowledgment regulations, which allow for evaluation based solely on modern community only after a determination that the petitioning group has met the requirements for previous unambiguous acknowledgment.

By failing to fully examine the Southern Sierra Miwok community from first sustained contact to 1981, the Proposed Finding lacked any real understanding of how the historical context of the group's history during that period impacted its modern community, even though those same regulations require the historical context of every petitioner be taken into account when evaluating the petition.

In light of this, I ask that you withdraw the 2016 Proposed Finding relating to Petitioner #82 and reexamine the full evidence the Southern Sierra Miwok Tribe has provided across all seven mandatory criteria. I am certain that upon further review, the Office of Indian Affairs will find that the Southern Sierra Miwok Nation's application for Federal Acknowledgment is legitimate and deserving of approval. Thank you for doing your part to help right this historical and ongoing injustice.

Kurt Vaughn, PhD