



Black Mountain Ranch Conservation Project Abstract

The **Black Mountain Ranch Conservation Project** is a landmark initiative by the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe to permanently protect approximately **4,809 acres** of pristine, undeveloped mountainous rangeland in the Diablo Range foothills near Milpitas, California (straddling Santa Clara and Alameda Counties). Adjacent to the Ohlone Regional Wilderness and forming critical headwaters of the Alameda Creek watershed, the property supports significant biodiversity, wildlife connectivity, and ecological recovery. Through fee-title acquisition paired with a conservation easement, the project will safeguard working agricultural lands, restore habitats, revive cultural practices, and provide public benefits while preventing urban sprawl.

Key Objectives

- **Conservation & Watershed Protection:** Permanently protect open space, rangeland, and Alameda Creek headwaters to support beaver recolonization, Chinook salmon recovery, and climate resilience.
- **Sustainable Agriculture:** Maintain commercial rotational cattle grazing on 3,000–3,500 acres using regenerative practices to improve soil health, reduce wildfire risk, and produce grass-fed beef.
- **Habitat & Biodiversity Enhancement:** Establish “**Sunflower Valley**” by interseeding native wild sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus* and *Helianthella castanea*) across 500–700 acres to boost pollinators, forage for Tule elk, and ecosystem resilience.
- **Cultural Revitalization:** Restore indigenous food systems, traditional seed gathering, and ceremonial practices through tribal stewardship.
- **Public Access & Recreation:** Expand regional trails (Bay Area Ridge Trail and Ohlone Wilderness Trail extensions) and develop eco-tourism and educational opportunities.
- **Wildlife Recovery:** Enhance corridors for Tule elk and other species while integrating tribal knowledge with modern conservation.

Funding Strategy

- **Primary Funding:** \$12,070,000 Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) Program grant request, including:
 - \$12,000,000 for acquisition (fee title).
 - \$60,000 for associated costs.
 - \$10,000 for Management/Carbon Farm Plan.
- **Matching Funds:** \$8 million in pre-applications submitted to the **Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB)** and **State Coastal Conservancy (SCC)** (\$4 million each).

Supportive Partner Organizations

- **Muwekma Ohlone Tribe** (*lead applicant and steward*)
- **Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation** (*the Tribe's non-profit land trust*)
- **Save Mount Diablo**
- **Bay Area Ridge Trail Network**
- *In discussion with additional support organizations and planning entities*

Pending Funding Partners

- **Sustainable Agriculture Land Conservation Program (SALC)**
- **Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB)**
- **State Coastal Conservancy (SCC)**

Long-Term Aspiration: “Muwékma Ohlone National Park”

Black Mountain Ranch serves as a foundational acquisition in the Muwékma Ohlone Tribe's broader 20-year vision to establish the **Muwékma Ohlone National Park** (Tuyštak 'Ooyakma 'Arweh), to eventually encompass **50,000 acres** across the lower Diablo Range. This tribally-led national park project aspires to create a protected landscape for permanent conservation, cultural revitalization, and Indigenous stewardship. It will feature low-impact eco-tourism, traditional food system restoration, language immersion zones, ceremonial grounds, youth and elder programs, and regenerative economies generating caretaker-employment opportunities for tribal members. The park aims to model decolonization through tribal governance, heal historical traumas, foster political liberation and support federal recognition, and demonstrate how Indigenous leadership drives ecological and community resilience for the benefit of all Bay Area residents.

Wildlife Protection Benefits

The project delivers critical benefits to key species and ecosystems:

- **Tule Elk:** Expands habitat and connectivity in the Diablo Range, supplementing forage with native sunflowers to support population recovery.
- **California Condor:** Contributes to broader recovery efforts through protected open space and reduced fragmentation in the species' historic range.
- **Beaver and Salmon:** Advances ongoing watershed restoration in Alameda Creek headwaters to support beaver reintroduction (creating wetlands and improving juvenile salmon survival) and the recent return of Chinook salmon.
- **Innovative Climate Adaptation:** Includes advanced study and potential implementation of **fog harvesting technologies** to enhance water security, support riparian habitats, and build drought resilience amid climate challenges.

This project exemplifies integrated tribal leadership in advancing California's goals for agricultural land conservation, watershed health, biodiversity, and environmental justice.