



Tuyštak 'Ooyakma 'Arweh

The Tuyštak Range and Valley Oaks

The Muwekma Ohlone National Park

Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area

A Vision Statement

March 2026

“The land is our first mother, sacred and alive. We do not own her; we belong to her, born of her soil, bound to protect and tend her as she tends us, for she holds our ancestors and our future generations.”

Tribal Chairwoman Charlene Nijmeh



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Executive Summary

The Muwekma Ohlone National Park project is a long term vision led by the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and supported by the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation. It aims to establish a tribally-led national park on aboriginal Ohlone lands, centering Indigenous methods of stewardship, cultural revitalization, and ecological restoration.

For our Bay Area neighbors, the park will serve as a world-class recreational asset. For our Tribe, it means culturally congruent ecotourism that creates jobs for tribal members and grows the Tribe's economy, while ensuring the survival of our people, traditions, food systems, and medicines for future generations.

Scope and Timeline: Over the next 20 years, the Tribe plans to acquire approximately 50,000 acres in the Tuyštak 'Ooyakma (known as the Diablo Range), encompassing the greater Ohlone Wilderness Area and surrounding landscapes in the San Francisco Bay region. These vast, extraordinary lands have been home to Ohlone people for more than 10,000 years.

Purpose: The project seeks to create a protected space for permanent conservation while enabling cultural reawakening, native plant restoration, traditional ecological practices, youth programs, elder gatherings, and community resilience. It models sustainable, land-based Indigenous management that benefits ecosystems, biodiversity, and surrounding societies through healthier watersheds, wildlife habitats, and shared cultural enrichment.

Impact: By reclaiming and protecting these homelands, the Muwekma Ohlone National Park would heal historical traumas from missionization, displacement, assimilation, economic marginalization, and political erasure; foster tribal survival and self-determination; and demonstrate how Indigenous governance is key to regenerative healing for both people and place.

This project represents a powerful step toward intergenerational healing, indigenous justice, community resilience, and a reciprocal relationship with the land—proving that when Indigenous peoples lead, entire regions thrive. For more details, visit the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation at muwekmafoundation.org.



A Strategy for Land, Life, and Liberation

Oaks whispering in the wind, meadows blooming with camas—hold our stories, but years of conquest, exploitation, and the vestiges of that colonial legal architecture have kept them out of our hands.

Now, we're working together to bring them back, using state grants and support from foundations and philanthropic partners to acquire lands that bring back beaver and salmon habitats, to revive our traditional food systems, and to heal the land with sustainable long-term reforestation and watershed restoration work.

These are practical steps toward what we've always known: the land is ours to care for.

This isn't just about owning land; it's about fixing what's broken for our kids and the earth. By getting these acres back, we're not only saving a place—we're keeping our ways alive, one steady effort at a time.

“Our Relatives—the deer who walk softly on our paths, the eagle who carries prayers on strong wings, the salmon who gift their lives to the river's flow—are not ours to take without thought. The Creator placed us here as their guardians, not their masters. To harm them is to wound our own family; to protect them is to honor the sacred balance that sustains all life.”

Joseph Torres, Firekeeper and Culture Bearer



Honoring Our Ancestors and the Sacred Land of Tuyštak

We begin with gratitude and remembrance.

To the ancestors who walked these ridges before the first dawn broke over Tuyštak, who gathered acorns beneath the great valley oaks, who tended the serpentine meadows with fire and song, who carried our stories across generations through flood and fire and forced removal—we offer our deepest respect. You are not gone. Your breath still moves in the wind that stirs the chaparral, your hands still shape the creeks that feed the Alameda Creek Watershed, your wisdom still lives in the roots of every deergrass and milkweed plant that waits to be called back to fullness.

Tuyštak—the mountain the outsiders named Mt. Diablo—is no inert pile of rock. It is a living being, the first land to emerge from the great waters in our creation time, the axis around which our world was made. From its summit, Coyote shaped the first people; from its slopes, Eagle watched over the renewal; from its hidden canyons, Hummingbird carried the seeds of life. The entire Diablo Range, our Tuyštak 'Ooyakma, is an extension of that sacred body—its oak savannas our granaries, its riparian corridors our lifelines, its high meadows our pharmacies and weaving grounds. We are not owners of this land; we are its children, its caretakers, bound by reciprocal obligation since time immemorial.



For over ten thousand years we have fulfilled that obligation. Even when Spanish missions tore our families apart, when bounty hunters pursued us into these very mountains, when American laws declared us vanished and took our titles to it, we never severed the cord. We hid in these canyons, whispered our languages in secret, preserved our fire knowledge, kept the names of plants and stars alive in memory. The land protected us then; today we return to protect it.

This vision for the Muwekma Ohlone National Park is our vow renewed. It is the formal declaration that we will once again live as we were intended to live—with Tuyštak, not apart from it. Through tribal ownership and governance, through the return of

ancient traditions to daily practice, through the healing of scarred watersheds and the reintroduction of relatives like beaver and salmon, we will restore balance. Not for ourselves alone, but for all who depend on these mountains: the tule elk, the golden eagle, the steelhead, the salmon, the pollinators, the future children of every people who will one day walk here in wonder.

We stand at the threshold of this work with humility and fierce determination. The ancestors are watching. The land is listening. Our unborn generations are waiting. May this vision carry their strength and their blessing.

Hichu mak nuwe — We are still here. And we are standing up for our homelands.



“They declared us vanished, our sovereignty stolen, our blood erased from the earth we have tended for ten thousand years. Yet we rise—unbroken, unbowed—because the land remembers our songs, our ancestors whisper in the winds, and our children's hearts beat with the same fire.”

Tribal Chairwoman Charlene Nijmeh

Our Path to Decolonization

For the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, the proposed Muwekma Ohlone National Park in the Diablo Range—known to us as Tuyštak—is not merely a conservation project. It stands as a living beacon of decolonization, a deliberate act of reclaiming sovereignty over our aboriginal homelands after centuries of erasure, displacement, and colonial theft. Our people have inhabited these lands for over 10,000 years, stewarded by oak savannas, riparian corridors, and serpentine grasslands through reciprocal relationships grounded in ancient traditions.

Spanish missions forcibly removed our ancestors and enslaved us at Missions Dolores, San Jose, and Santa Clara in the late 18th century, followed by Mexican secularization and American expansion that stripped us of our territories, language, and lifeways -- and waging a war of extermination against us, even offering bounties on our scalps.

The Verona Band of Alameda County, our direct forebears, were federally recognized. But in 1978, when the Bureau of Indian Affairs first drafted an official list of recognized tribes, erred in excluding us. Since then, we've been in a struggle with the federal government to acknowledge its mistake and to be seen, rendering us landless in our own homeland, despite never being terminated by an act of Congress.



This park represents the reversal of that violence. Through land repatriation—with aspirations to acquire properties like the N3 Ranch, Citadel Ranch, and Black Mountain Ranch—we dismantle colonial structures that commodified our territories for grazing, development, and extraction. Urban sprawl from the Bay Area's growth crisis continues this legacy, converting agricultural lands at alarming rates and threatening the ecological integrity we have long struggled to protect. The park rejects these extractive ambitions by prioritizing tribal ownership and governance, ensuring decisions reflect our spiritual obligations to the land rather than profit-driven exploitation.

Tradition-driven stewardship forms the core of this decolonization. Our practices—seasonal harvesting of acorns, elderberries, and pine nuts; controlled cultural burns to regenerate native plants like deergrass and milkweed; beaver reintroductions to restore wetlands; and high-elevation sunflower plantings for pollinators—revive sustainable systems suppressed under colonialism. These are not imported conservation techniques but

ancestral responsibilities that enhance biodiversity, sequester carbon, and build resilience against wildfires and climate change far more effectively than colonial models of “pristine wilderness” that erased Indigenous presence.

By establishing this tribally-led national park, we reject the narrative of extinction imposed by anthropologists like A.L. Kroeber and affirm our enduring existence. The park becomes a space of healing from historical traumas, where cultural reawakening intersects with political liberation and nation building. It challenges settler-colonial claims to these lands, promoting infill development elsewhere while preserving open space for future generations.

With Tuyštak 'Ooyakma, decolonization is active: land returned, knowledge honored, and sovereignty exercised through ancient tradition that benefits all life. This vision invites allies to join us in dismantling the remnants of empire, one repatriated acre at a time, toward true justice and ecological harmony.

“The colonizer's shadow lingers longest in the mind—whispering that our ways are gone, our languages broken, our spirits dimmed by missions and missions of forgetting. Yet to decolonize the mind is to awaken what was never truly lost: the ancient songs of our ancestors rising again in our children's voices, the wisdom of the land teaching us we are not conquered but caretakers still. Liberation begins here, in refusing the lie of disappearance, in remembering who we are as Muwekma—the People of this place—whole, resilient, and free.”

Joseph Torres, Firekeeper and Culture Bearer



People Born of these Mountains

In the time before time, as our Muwekma Ohlone ancestors have passed down through generations, the world was engulfed in a great flood, a cataclysm that drowned all but one sacred peak: Tuyštak, the “dawn of time,” known today as Mount Diablo.

From this summit, rising 3,849 feet in the heart of the Diablo Range, Coyote, Eagle, and Hummingbird stood vigil as the waters lapped at their feet. Eagle, our chief spirit, commanded Coyote to survey the receding seas, and together they shaped the new world. Coyote, the clever teacher, plucked feathers from birds to form the first people, breathing life into us amid the oak groves and serpentine grasslands below. Hummingbird, swift and resilient, carried the seeds of renewal, ensuring the land's rebirth.



This creation story binds us eternally to Tuyštak and the greater Diablo Range—our Tuyštak 'Ooyakma—a vast, rugged expanse stretching from Alameda to Santa Clara Counties, cradling riparian streams, chaparral hills, and ancient valleys. We are the people born of these mountains; who gathered acorns from valley oaks, fished steelhead in Alameda Creek, and tended the land with fire to nurture and regenerate the beautiful bounty of this place. The range was our cradle, providing sustenance through elderberries, pine nuts, and wild game, while its peaks offered spiritual communion. Tuyštak is not just a mountain; it is the axis of our cosmos, where our world began and where our ancient traditions were forged—practices of harmony that sustained ecosystems for over 10,000 years.

Yet, these same mountains became our refuge during the darkest eras of genocide. Spanish missions—Dolores, San Jose, and Santa Clara—forcibly enslaved our people in the late 1700s, stripping us of freedom and culture, reducing our numbers from tens of

thousands to mere hundreds through disease, labor, and violence. Under Mexican rule, secularization scattered us further, but the American era unleashed state-sanctioned horror. After California's 1850 statehood, amid the Gold Rush frenzy, Governor Peter Burnett declared a war of extermination, funding militias with bounties—\$5 per scalp, up to \$25 for a head—turning our homelands into killing fields.

Thousands perished in massacres, but our ancestors fled into the Diablo Range's hidden canyons and oak woodlands, evading bounty hunters in remote enclaves like the Ohlone Wilderness. Blending with shadows, they preserved our languages, songs, and traditional practices in secret, ensuring survival against erasure.

Today, as we reclaim these lands through the Muwekma Ohlone National Park Initiative, Tuyštak 'Ooyakma calls us home. We are not relics of the past but its living manifestations, rising from the mountains that birthed and sheltered us, to heal, protect, and steward it once more.

“During the Gold Rush, as strangers flooded our ancestral lands seeking gold and blood, our people fled to the hidden mountains now known as the Ohlone Wilderness. There, among ancient oaks and quiet creeks, they hid from hunters paid for our scalps and militias that burned villages. These wild heights became sanctuaries of survival. The Ohlone Wilderness bears witness: we did not vanish. We endured, we held fast to the earth that remembers us.”

Bernadette Quiroz, Director of Language Revitalization Programs



Igniting Our Political Liberation by Forging Alliances for Tribal Autonomy

The Muwekma Ohlone National Park Initiative is more than ecological restoration; it is a deliberate engine for political liberation. For too long, our Tribe has navigated a landscape of imposed invisibility—landlessness in our aboriginal homeland, and exclusion from the self-determination rights afforded to other sovereign nations. This vision for a tribally owned and governed park in the Tuyštak 'Ooyakma (Diablo Range) is our pathway to reclaiming political autonomy, rebuilding governance structures, and securing eventual self-determination over a restored land base of more than 50,000 acres over the next twenty years.

Central to this liberation is federal reaffirmation of our tribal status. The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe has maintained continuous community identity, cultural continuity, and political authority despite bureaucratic erasure. We are actively pursuing administrative recognition through the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA) and, if necessary, congressional legislation. A restored land base anchored by the proposed national park will provide space for our ongoing political existence and territorial integrity. Ownership of contiguous protected acreage will demonstrate our capacity for self-governance, environmental stewardship, and economic self-sufficiency, strengthening our legal and moral claim to sovereignty.



SACRED TURTLE ISLANDS
MUWEKMA T
of S.F. BAY A
GERALDINE "GERRY" C
of the Muwekma
7.06.60 - 03/15/

"Columbus's African Wars
could not end"
THE TRAIL OF TRUTH

FREE

Strategic partnerships with the National Park Service (NPS) and the State of California will form another cornerstone. We envision a co-management or collaborative model similar to those at tribal-national park units such as Bears Ears or Grand Canyon–Parashant. Negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the NPS during the planning phase—potentially funded through California’s Clean Climate Initiatives and other sources, will establish frameworks for joint stewardship, technical assistance, and eventual designation of portions of the park under protections while preserving tribal primacy in governance, cultural programming, and decision-making. This relationship transforms the NPS from a potential gatekeeper into an ally in tribal-led conservation.

Multi-jurisdictional advocacy is equally essential. The park will span Santa Clara and Alameda Counties, requiring coordinated amendments to general plans, zoning ordinances, and open-space policies to prevent incompatible development and secure agricultural and conservation designations. We are

engaging county supervisors, state assembly and senate members, the California Department of Conservation, the Wildlife Conservation Board, and The Conservation Fund to build a coalition that aligns agency priorities with tribal sovereignty goals. These alliances will facilitate phased acquisitions—beginning with Black Mountain Ranch—and create pathways for additional fee title purchases over the next two decades.

Through these strategies, the Muwekma Ohlone National Park becomes the physical and political foundation for a revitalized nation. Self-determination is exercised not only through cultural revival and economic empowerment but through sovereign governance over a meaningful land base. We are not asking for permission to exist; we are asserting our inherent aboriginal right to govern the lands that have always governed us. In forging these alliances, we ignite the flame of political liberation, ensuring that future generations inherit not only restored ecosystems but restored authority.

"Tribal sovereignty is the root that strengthens the whole tree. When we exercise self-determination on our aboriginal lands, we protect waters, forests, and wildlife with ancient wisdom for everyone's benefit. When tribal economies generate jobs and growth that uplift neighboring communities, we all thrive. Our languages, songs, and ceremonies enrich the shared cultural fabric of this land."

Bernadette Quiroz, Director of Language Revitalization Programs



Ensuring Survival and Resilience Amidst Adversity and Climate Challenges

The Muwekma Ohlone Tribe has never been a people of defeat. We have endured conquest, genocide, Christianization, assimilation, removal, dispossession, cultural suppression, economic marginalization, and political erasure, yet we persist. Our survival is not accidental; it is the result of deep, adaptive wisdom encoded in our unbreakable connection to the land. The Muwekma Ohlone National Park in the Tuyštak 'Ooyakma (Diablo Range) is the next chapter in that story of endurance—a deliberate strategy to ensure the physical, ecological, and cultural survival of our people and the ecosystems we are bound to protect for future generations.

The Diablo Range faces existential threats: relentless urban sprawl from the Bay Area's housing crisis, the conversion of agricultural lands at rates that have already reduced Alameda County's rangeland and pasture by 46% since the 1960s, intensifying wildfires fueled by climate change and decades of fire suppression, and the degradation of watersheds critical to salmon, steelhead, and human communities downstream. These are not abstract dangers; they are direct assaults on the land that has sheltered and sustained us for millennia. Our response is rooted in ecologically-driven adaptive measures intended to build resilience at every scale.



Watershed restoration stands at the forefront. The park will prioritize the Alameda Creek watershed and its tributaries, removing legacy barriers, stabilizing banks with native riparian plantings, and cooling waters to support the return of Chinook salmon and steelhead—species that have already begun recolonizing restored reaches in Sunol and Niles Canyon. These efforts will expand high-quality spawning habitat by 15+ miles, increasing adult returns and securing a food source central to our cultural and nutritional lifeways.

Beaver reintroductions will serve as keystone ecological engineering. Beavers, historically present in adjacent watersheds and now being successfully reintroduced on tribal and public lands across California, create wetlands, raise water tables, reduce wildfire risk through moistened landscapes, and attract biodiversity from willow flycatchers to river otters. By siting family groups in riparian zones across the park, we aim to generate over 100 acres of new wetland habitat within the first five years, directly countering drought and fire vulnerability.

Fire stewardship, long suppressed under colonial policy, will return through controlled cultural burns. Our ancestors used low-intensity, seasonal fires to regenerate deergrass for basketry, promote milkweed and other medicinal plants, and reduce fuel loads. Reviving these practices will lower megafire intensity by 40–50% while enhancing forage, medicinal resources, and cultural continuity.

These measures are not isolated tactics; they form an integrated system of resilience. By protecting 50,000+ acres from sprawl, we preserve open space, promote infill development elsewhere, and create a contiguous buffer that safeguards biodiversity hotspots against fragmentation. The park ensures that future Muwekma children will inherit not only stories of survival but a living, thriving homeland capable of withstanding the climate crises ahead.

Our survival has always depended on the land's health. Through the Muwekma Ohlone National Park, we secure both—ensuring that the mountains that once hid us from genocide now stand as fortresses of resilience for generations yet unborn.

“Indigenous economies thrive when land is returned, not because we extract from it until it breaks, but because learn from it as it gives. As Muwekma Ohlone, we have obligations to our lands to protect, to heal, to keep alive traditional foods and medicines, and to keep ancient traditions for future generations. True development regenerates life—for people, animals, waters—rather than depletes it.”

Tribal Chairwoman Charlene Nijmeh



Nation Building, Sustainable Land Based Economies, and Community Revitalization

The Muwekma Ohlone National Park is not only a place of healing and ecological restoration; it is the foundation upon which we will protect a thriving, self-sufficient tribal nation. For generations, our people have been denied the economic base necessary for true sovereignty. Landlessness, poverty, and exclusion from development opportunities have been the legacies of colonial dispossession. Through this tribally owned and governed park, we envision a model of nation building that transforms ancestral stewardship into sustainable prosperity—generating revenue, creating jobs, and fostering equity while remaining deeply rooted in our cultural and spiritual values.

At the heart of this economic vision is sustainable agri- and eco-tourism. The dramatic landscapes of Tuyštak 'Ooyakma—oak savannas, serpentine grasslands, riparian canyons, and panoramic views—offer unparalleled opportunities for low-impact, culturally authentic visitor experiences. We hope to welcome 500,000+ visitors annually through guided native plant harvesting tours, farm-to-table culinary immersions featuring traditional Ohlone foods (acorn-based dishes, elderberry preserves, wild greens), wildlife horseback safaris to observe tule elk and returning salmon runs, cultural wellness retreats with storytelling and basket-weaving workshops, and educational programs on ecological knowledge and climate resilience. These experiences will be designed and led by tribal members, ensuring authenticity, respect for sacred sites, and direct economic benefit to the community.



Job creation will be immediate and meaningful. We project over 200 permanent, seasonal, and part time positions in the first decade, including cultural guides, interpretive educators, native plant nursery operators, eco-tourism coordinators, hospitality staff, and land restoration technicians. These opportunities prioritize tribal citizens and descendants, providing training, living wages, and pathways to leadership within the park's governance structure. Revenue from visitor fees, merchandise (such as traditionally crafted goods), and partnerships will be reinvested into further land acquisitions, and an endowment for long-term self-sufficiency.

This economic model advances food sovereignty by centering indigenous food systems. The park will include demonstration gardens and orchards of native species—acorns, manzanita, chia, and sunflowers—reviving

ancestral diets and agricultural practices suppressed under colonialism. Profits will support community food distribution, seed saving, and ensuring that economic growth strengthens rather than dilutes our cultural identity.

By channeling tourism revenue back into conservation and community development, we create a virtuous cycle: protected lands attract visitors, visitors generate income, income enables more land protection and tribal investment. This approach rejects extractive capitalism in favor of regenerative economies that benefit the land, the people, and future generations. The Muwekma Ohlone National Park will demonstrate that tribal nation building can be both economically viable and spiritually grounded—proving that sovereignty flourishes when rooted in the land we have always known as home.

“The health of our people and the health of the land are one breath, one heartbeat. When the creeks run clear and the oaks bear abundantly, when the creatures thrive and the soils regenerate, our bodies strengthen, our spirits lift, our ceremonies flourish. But when the earth is scarred by extraction, poisoned waters, or forgotten obligations to it, our communities suffer the same wounds—illness, disconnection, loss of knowledge passed through generations.”

Joseph Torres, Firekeeper and Culture Bearer



Cultural Reawakening, Reviving Traditions, and Healing the Spirit

The Muwekma Ohlone National Park will serve as a sacred space for cultural reawakening—a place where our people can once again live fully in relationship with the land, language, ceremonies, and knowledge systems that colonialism sought to extinguish. For generations, our traditions were driven underground: Ohlone languages suppressed in mission schools, ceremonies outlawed or practiced in secret, basket-weaving and plant medicines restricted by land loss and displacement. The park reclaims these lifeways, offering a living sanctuary where cultural continuity is not preserved in museums but actively revived, practiced, and passed forward.

Central to this resurgence is the revitalization of our Chochenyo and Tamien languages. Within the park, we will establish dedicated language immersion zones—spaces where fluent speakers and learners converse exclusively in Ohlone during guided walks, storytelling sessions, and daily interactions. Language camps for youth, adult classes, and digital archives recorded on-site will accelerate fluency and ensure transmission to future generations. These efforts honor the resilience of elders who kept fragments of our tongues alive and fulfill our obligation to restore what was stolen.



Ceremonies and spiritual practices will return to their proper home in Tuyštak. Seasonal gatherings—acorn harvests, first-fruit blessings, solstice observances, and mourning ceremonies—will unfold openly in oak groves and along creek banks, guided by traditional protocols and open to tribal citizens. Cultural wellness retreats will offer participants healing through land-based practices: sweat lodges near restored riparian zones, fasting and vision quests on high ridges, and guided meditation amid native plant communities. These retreats will address intergenerational trauma—historical genocide, forced assimilation, and ongoing marginalization—by reconnecting body, mind, and spirit to the land that has always held our people.

Storytelling circles will become a daily rhythm of the park. Under ancient oaks or beside restored wetlands, elders and knowledge keepers will share creation stories, migration narratives, and

teachings about Coyote, Eagle, and Hummingbird. Visitors and tribal members alike will listen, learn, and contribute, fostering cross-generational dialogue and cultural pride. These circles will be complemented by plant restorations that directly support traditional lifeways: reviving deergrass for basketry, milkweed for cordage and medicine, yerba santa for respiratory healing, and clarkia for ceremonial use. Each restored species becomes a living classroom and a medicine chest, reinforcing the inseparability of cultural health and ecological health.

This refuge will become a source of profound spiritual and emotional healing, countering centuries of erasure by making visible and vibrant what colonialism tried to erase. Our people will walk these trails not as relics of the past, but as living inheritors of the ancient wisdom and sacred traditions that have been born out of thousands of years of our relationship with these lands.



A Call to the World

Our dear partners,

The Muwekma Ohlone National Park Initiative is not ours alone. It is an offering to the world—a tribally-led sanctuary born of ancient responsibility and urgent necessity, extended as an invitation to all who recognize that planetary health and indigenous justice are inseparable. Tuyštak 'Ooyakma, the range that cradled our creation and sheltered our survival, now calls for collective action. We cannot—and should not—undertake this restoration in isolation. The healing of these lands, the revival of our lifeways, and the protection of this fragile ecosystem require the wisdom, resources, and solidarity of many hands.

We invite allies across every sector: federal and state agencies committed to conservation and tribal sovereignty; philanthropic partners who understand that meaningful climate action centers Indigenous leadership; conservation organizations with technical expertise in land acquisition, restoration, and mitigation; academic institutions eager to learn from and amplify the wisdom of ancient traditions; businesses seeking regenerative models of tourism and stewardship; and individuals worldwide who believe that justice for First Peoples is essential to justice for the Earth.



This is a shared responsibility. The threats confronting the Tuyštak 'Ooyakma—urban sprawl, wildfire intensification, watershed degradation, biodiversity loss—are symptoms of a global crisis that no single nation, community, or institution can solve alone. By partnering with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, you join a movement that refuses to separate ecological recovery from cultural and political liberation. Every acre repatriated, every beaver family reintroduced, every cultural burn conducted, every visitor welcomed with respect, advances not only our tribal nation but our collective hope for a livable planet.

We seek collaborators who will walk beside us in good faith: co-developing governance frameworks that honor tribal primacy; providing funding and technical assistance for phased acquisitions and restorations; advocating for policies that protect working landscapes while centering Indigenous rights; documenting and disseminating the lessons of tradition-driven stewardship; and amplifying our

voice in forums where decisions about land, water, and climate are made.

To those in dialogue with us—thank you for your early partnership. To those yet to join: the door is open. This is not charity; it is reciprocity. The Muwekma Ohlone people have carried knowledge of these mountains for millennia. In return, we offer a model of regeneration that can inspire communities everywhere.

The vision is clear: a tribally-owned national park of more than 50,000 acres where oak savannas thrive, salmon return, cultural practices flourish, and economic self-sufficiency is realized through sustainable tourism. But the realization depends on collective will.

We call on the world to stand with us. Let us co-create this sanctuary—not as a monument to the past, but as a living testament to what becomes possible when Indigenous sovereignty, ecological wisdom, and shared responsibility converge.

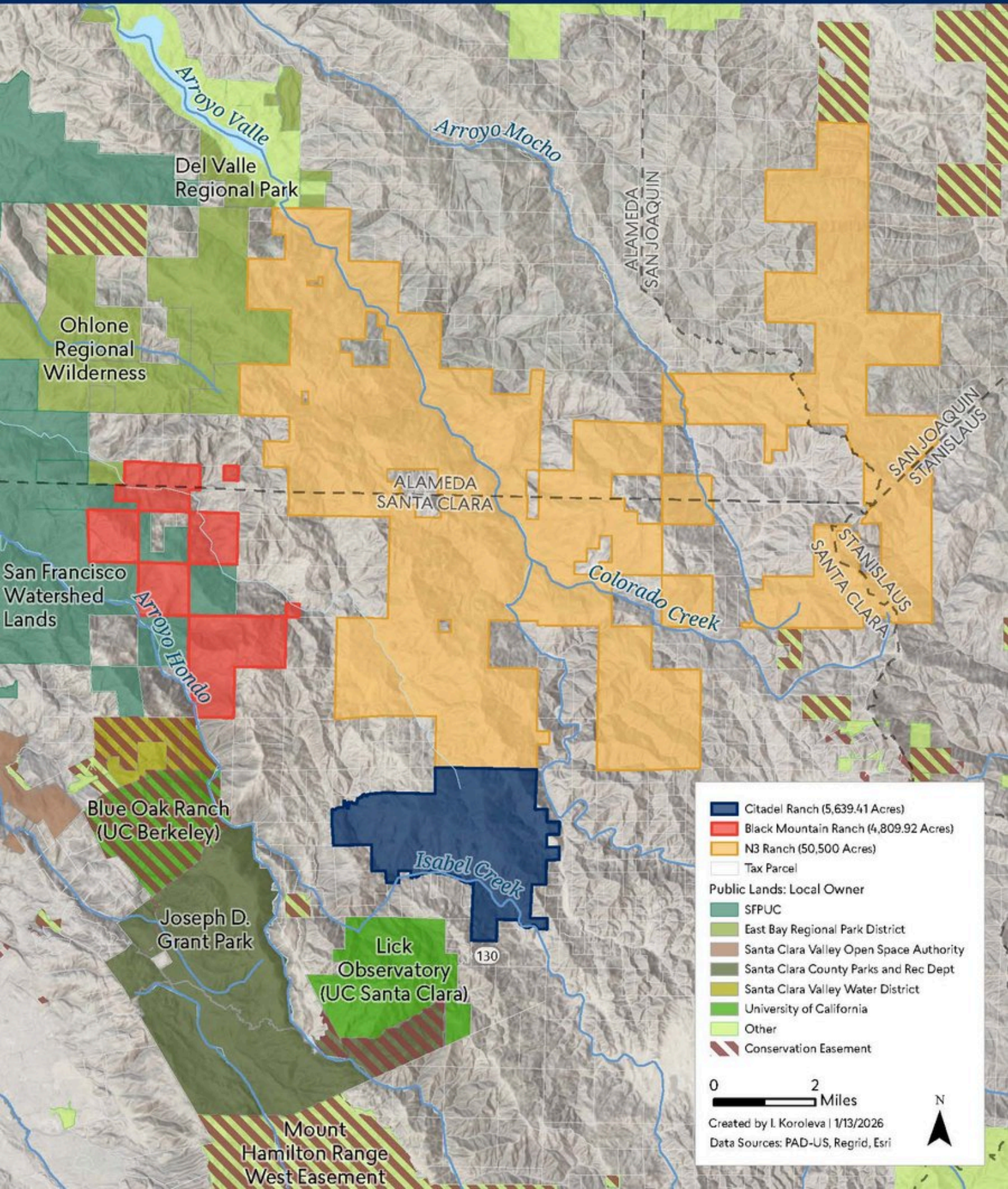
With deep gratitude,

Charlene Nijmeh

Tribal Chairwoman

Black Mountain Ranch and Citadel Ranch

Santa Clara and Alameda Counties, California



- Citadel Ranch (5,639.41 Acres)
- Black Mountain Ranch (4,809.92 Acres)
- N3 Ranch (50,500 Acres)
- Tax Parcel

- Public Lands: Local Owner
- SFPUC
 - East Bay Regional Park District
 - Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
 - Santa Clara County Parks and Rec Dept
 - Santa Clara Valley Water District
 - University of California
 - Other
 - Conservation Easement

0 2 Miles

Created by I. Koroleva | 1/13/2026

Data Sources: PAD-US, Regrid, Esri

The Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation

A tribal land trust founded with
deep purpose.

Established in 2021, the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation emerged as a vital extension of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe's enduring fight for sovereignty and cultural continuity in our unceded and unsurrendered aboriginal San Francisco Bay Area homelands. Initiated by dedicated tribal members amid renewed calls for federal recognition and land repatriation, the Foundation was supported by the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), which recognized our Tribe's aboriginal title to the region's conserved landscapes. This collaboration birthed an independent Indigenous land trust, designed to bridge colonial dispossession with restorative justice, enabling the Tribe to reclaim stewardship over sacred sites disrupted by missions, ranchos, and urban expansion.

Under the leadership of Board President Charlene Nijmeh, the Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Chairwoman, the Foundation's mission centers on fostering resilience through cultural revitalization, community education, and permanent access to ancestral territories. Its board unites Tribal voices—Richard Torres, Thomas Martinez, Corina Arellano, Joseph Torres, Bernadette Quiroz, and Julie Dominguez—with allied experts like ethnohistorian Alan Leventhal, anthropologists Dr. Mike V. Wilcox and Dr. Lee Panich, biologist Dr. Tadashi Fukami, and ecologist Aaron Hébert. Together, they protect natural and cultural resources, host awareness-raising events, and champion repatriation initiatives.

From its inception, the Foundation has amplified Ohlone voices and traditional thinking about land management into conservation work and weaving Chochoyeno language, dances, and crafts back into daily life. By 2026, it has secured partnerships for youth campouts at Jasper Ridge and exhibitions at New Museum Los Gatos, transforming underutilized lands into vibrant hubs for ceremonies and native gardens.

Preservation Foundation's core mission is to secure access, ownership, and stewardship of ancestral territories for the Tribe, establishing a permanent land base dedicated to conservation, cultural revitalization, and sovereign resilience. This work counters centuries of colonial dispossession, from Spanish missions to U.S. policies, enabling a future of clean water, healthy soils, and vibrant ecosystems under tribal care.

Board of Directors

Charlene Nijmeh, Tribal Chairwoman and Board President

Charlene C. Nijmeh, President of the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation and Chairwoman of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area, leads initiatives in cultural revitalization, land stewardship, and education for the Tribe. Serving as Chairwoman since 2018, she upholds her mother Rosemary Cambra's 40-year legacy as the former Chairwoman and a renowned leader in the struggle for political liberation.

Aaron Hebert, Treasurer

Aaron Hébert, Board Treasurer of the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation, is an ecologist and Natural Resources Manager at the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority. He manages cultural resources with Native American communities, forging Bay Area conservation partnerships and sharing land trust expertise to bolster tribal revitalization and sovereignty.

Richard Torres

Richard Torres is a Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Member and Board Member of the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation and is related to the Marine Sanchez Martinez lineage. Educated in communication and social work, he teaches at West Valley and Skyline Community Colleges counseling, organizes Indigenous events, and advocates for Native sovereignty and social justice. He is pursuing his PHD at the Doerr School of Sustainability Emmett Interdisciplinary Program in Environment and Resources (E-IPER) at Stanford University.

Alan Leventhal, Tribal Ethnohistorian

Alan Leventhal, Board Member and Tribal Ethnohistorian of the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation, is an Emeritus Lecturer in Anthropology at San Jose State University. For over 42 years, he has partnered with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe as senior archaeologist, driving repatriation, cultural heritage preservation, and federal recognition through ethnohistorical research, genomics studies, and collaborative exhibits.

Thomas Martinez

Thomas Martinez of the Marine Sanchez lineage, Board Member of the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation, is an enrolled tribal member and son of enrolled tribal member Candelario T. Martinez, Dolores Sanchez's eldest son who served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Korean War in the 1950s. Thomas who is a San Jose native and an honorably discharged Army veteran, has a daughter and granddaughter—dual citizens of Muwekma Ohlone and Tohono O'odham Nations.

Corina Arellano

Corina Arellano, Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Member and Board Member of the Muwekma Ohlone Foundation, serves as Community Education Co-Chair. Corina is a dedicated traditional Ohlone dancer that includes the shake-head style dance. She leads events such as land acknowledgments and Muwekma Ohlone Tribal flag raising events fostering public understanding of Ohlone history and heritage. Corina is a mother of two boys and she is energetically engaged in the cultural revitalization culture and language.

Dr, Michael Wilcox

Mike V. Wilcox (Phd, Harvard), Board Member of the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation, is a Stanford University anthropologist and the Tribe's Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. A founding collaborator, he drives repatriation, ethnohistorical research, and cultural revitalization, emphasizing traditional land stewardship, fire ecology, and sustainable food systems to combat colonial erasure and bolster indigenous sovereignty in the Bay Area.

Dr. Tadashi Fukami

Tadashi Fukami (Phd, Tennessee), Board Member of the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation, is a Professor of Biology and Earth System Science at Stanford University. As Faculty Director of Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve ('Ootchamin 'Ooyakma), he fosters cultural revitalization and Indigenous science as an ally, informed by prior work in Aotearoa and Hawai'i.

Dr. Lee Panich

Lee Panich (PhD, Berkeley), Board Member of the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation, is Professor of Anthropology at Santa Clara University. An archaeologist and historical anthropologist, he has collaborated with the Tribe for over 20 years on repatriation, heritage preservation, and federal recognition, employing archaeological, ethnographic, and archival methods to reclaim indigenous histories.

Joseph Torres

Joseph Torres is a Muwekma Ohlone Culture Bearer, Dance Captain, and Board Member of the Preservation Foundation,. A spiritual leader, he mentors youth in song, dance, and regalia-making, organizing gatherings and securing lands for ceremonies. He is a father of three children, he embodies artistry, music, and cultural vitality as a Traditional California Native dancer.

Bernadette Quiroz

Bernadette Quiroz, Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Member and Board Member of the Preservation Foundation, chairs Language Revitalization efforts to revive the endangered Chochenyo language through innovative online tools and cultural integration. Bernadette's great-grandmother Dolores Sanchez was born on the Sunol Rancheria in 1911 and baptized at Mission San Jose in 1912. Bernadette is a passionate mother of three, she supports fundraising and cherishes hearing her people speak their native tongue.

Albert Arellano

Albert Arellano is a Muwekma Ohlone tribal member and serves as a MOPF Board Member representing the Marine-Arellano lineage. He is the grandson of Albert Arellano, Sr. who was born on the Alisal Rancheria in 1909. He actively collaborates with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe to co-lead ceremonial practices and is deeply committed to cultural revitalization alongside his children and grandchildren. Deeply connected to the land and waters, Albert is passionate about fishing and works to restore access to traditional coastal food sources for present and future generations.

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