

# Redwood Nation Earth First!

Dear Supporters,

We've done so many actions and demos this year they're all starting to run together ... into a campaign! In this second year of nonviolent direct action to rein in Caltrans' environmentally and culturally destructive Willits bypass project, our pull-out-the-stops efforts have gained wider public attention and support for less damaging alternatives. Most importantly, it's still not too late to protect wetlands and, as it turns out, a treasure trove of ancient Native American Pomo Indian sites.

While not getting arrested in droves as we did last year, it's not for lack of trying. We've physically "occupied" the places we seek to protect by repeatedly going out onto the wetlands, aka the restricted Caltrans construction zone. Led by lineal descendants of some of the original native inhabitants who once lived and thrived around the abundant inland lake, we sang, danced and prayed.

Caltrans' admission this summer that it had completely destroyed a known ancient Pomo village site due to "mapping errors" has outraged local tribes' members. The ongoing discovery "by bulldozer" of hundreds of artifacts and dozens of sites has galvanized demands for increased access for Native monitors and protection. This area has been defined by the National Historic Preservation Society as an Archeological District. Working with new coalition partners, members of the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians and the California American Indian Movement, (AIM), has greatly expanded and energized this campaign.

In June, a group gathered at our tipi site directly across from the wetlands. After a prayer to "...open the hearts of those with the power to do something" ... [to protect the ancestors], we crossed highway 101 and walked onto the construction site, remaining there observed but unopposed by law enforcement.

On July 2, we were honored to host the California AIM Spirit Runners on their annual marathon with the timely theme of water, accompanying them as they ran from the south end of Willits to the north. A drum and prayer circle was held in Willits City Park. Food was shared with a crowd of over a hundred supporters on a day of over 100 degrees in the shade. In a virtually unheard move the Army Corps suspended Caltrans' operating permit on June 20 for three weeks, citing violations and noncompliance with sections 404 and 401 of the Clean Water Act.

In an end-of-season burst of resistance to the senseless disrespect of Mother Earth, a group of thirty protesters formed banner blockades across three haul roads, halting all incoming fill trucks and preventing them from dumping

soil on the contested wetlands for the day of Oct. 23. Pomo tribal representatives, elders and grandchildren held protest signs, drummed and danced inside an archeological area, bringing the Pomo village back to life. Two CHP officers responded to the scene but declined to arrest anyone. The trucks turned around without unloading.

On Nov. 18, Earth First!, the Coalition to Save Little Lake Valley, Bay Area Coalition to Save Headwaters, and AIM held a spirited and noisy rally in front of the Army Corps of Engineer's office in San Francisco, chanting "Army Corps, Open the Door." The Coyote Valley Tribal Council demanded government-to-government consultations on the bypass' impacts on ancestral sites. Such consultations are the right of sovereign nations such as the Sherwood and Coyote Bands of Pomo Indians but the Army Corp has, until now, stonewalled formal requests to meet with tribal representatives. Both these actions garnered solid local and regional media coverage and video footage of the actions aired on KGO channel 7 in the Bay Area.

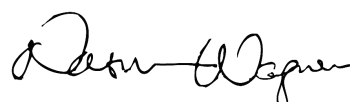
Thanks (possibly in equal measures) to our effective and persistent protests, and Caltrans' bureaucratic bumbling, work this season has lagged far enough behind schedule. This leaves open options for the scaled back redesign of the Northern Interchange we've been promoting for the past year and a half. The redesign would protect 25-30 acres of precious wetlands, avoid further disturbance of the ancestral Pomo sites, reduce carbon pollution, and greenhouse gasses that contribute to deadly climate change, all while saving time and millions of dollars. Predictably, Caltrans has refused to consider this ultra-reasonable solution, insisting instead on building a massive diamond interchange for a freeway to nowhere, the mythical, unfunded, 4-lane Phase II.

As we go to print, the California Transportation Commission has forked over another 64 million taxpayer smackers to Caltrans for cost overruns, most of which they blame on guess who? According to Caltrans, protests and legal challenges have drained their entire \$10 million "contingency fund" and delayed the project for two years.

We must've done something right because the media are calling, our proposal is still kicking, the campaign has ballooned and we're flat broke again. The gas, printing, phone bills, and T-shirt receipts are piling up and the last of your much appreciated previous donations have been cleaned out. Please help by sending as much moolah as you can to help us stay standing strong on the front lines of nonviolent direct action on the North Coast.

And did I mention we are taking on the still rampant use of herbicides in the forest by Mendocino Redwood Company and now proposed by Caltrans on the wetlands? Yep, it never ends. But action is indeed the antidote to despair! With your help we'll continue to put the Earth First!

Solidarity,



Naomi Wagner

