

July 25, 2010

Shane McAfee, General Manager
Greater Vallejo Recreation District
395 Amador St., Vallejo, CA 94590

Dear Mr. McAfee,


I am a Ph.D. Candidate in Native American Studies at the University of California, Davis. I am writing to add my voice to that of the numerous tribes, organizations and individuals who are calling for the protection of the Sacred Grounds of *Sogorea Te*, the Glen Cove Shellmound. The Native peoples of the Bay Area of been assembling at Sogorea Te for millennia to worship, trade and celebrate community. Sogorea Te is deeply sacred to Ohlone, Coast Miwok, Maidu, Wintu and other Native peoples of the area. Further development of this sacred site will irrevocably destroy the shell mound deposits located there, erasing not only the historical record of the Indigenous peoples, but also their inherent rights to worship, reclaim their ancestors, and renew themselves and their families.

Under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978), Native Americans have rights of protection for their sacred sites and traditional areas of worship. The Act states “that henceforth it shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise [their] traditional religions... including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites.” In addition, the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution states that “Congress shall make no laws respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” This law specifically applies to Native Americans and their sacred sites and places of worship.

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA, 1990) requires all agencies receiving federal funding to return Native American remains and cultural items to their respective peoples. This includes sacred items, funerary objects and items of cultural patrimony. No Native American burial site or sacred site may be disturbed without consultation with the affected Tribes. In addition California law (SB 18) requires local (city and county) governments to engage in meaningful, in-depth consultation with California Native American tribes and tribal organizations to aid in the protection of cultural places and sacred sites, through local land use planning. To date, no such consultation has taken place between GVRD and members of the Bay Area Native American Community. By continuing with development at *Sogorea Te*, GVRD and the City of Vallejo would be in violation of State, Federal and Indigenous Law – as well as basic principles of human rights.

I am requesting that the Greater Vallejo Recreation District respect the rights and wishes of the First Peoples of Vallejo and immediately stop all development at Sogorea Te. In addition, meaningful consultation with the Vallejo Inter-Tribal Council and other local Tribes and Indigenous Organizations must be initiated at once. A people’s culture is its life and its survival – it is essential that these rights of religion and sacred space be upheld.

Sincerely,



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cc: City of Vallejo; GVRD Board of Directors; Vallejo Inter-Tribal Council; Geenaction