

Friends of Humbug celebrate upcoming land acquisitions

📅 August 3, 2018 👤 Stacy Fisher, Staff Writer 💬 0 Comments

The Maidu Summit Consortium hosted the 2018 Friends of Humbug Gathering and potluck at Yellow Creek Campground in beautiful northern Humbug Valley on July 21.

The free annual event, which included vendors, a drawing, and other activities such as singing and dancing, recognizes the work being done to transfer Humbug Valley — known as Tásmam Kojóm in the Maidu language — and other parcels of ancestral lands back to the Mountain Maidu people.

The Friends of Humbug Gathering is a chance for the Maidu Summit Consortium to thank all past, present and future members and surrounding communities for their continuing support.

Part culinary affair, the celebration lasted until late afternoon, and was open to the public. The event included quite a number of varied dishes lined up on tables under canopies for guests to enjoy.

A number of youngsters took the opportunity to frolic in the crystal clear creek adjacent to the campground site, while Maidu Elders like Ben



Ken Holbrook, Maidu Summit Consortium executive director, welcomes guests to the 2018 Friends of Humbug Gathering and potluck at Yellow Creek Campground in northern Humbug Valley on July 21. Holbrook also updated attendees on the progress in the transfer of Humbug Valley (Tásmam Kojóm) and other parcels of ancestral lands back to the Mountain Maidu people. Photos by Stacy Fisher

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Cunningham and Gridley Hilpert welcomed attendees and spoke to the crowd about Maidu culture and history.

Maidu Summit Consortium Executive Director Ken Holbrook also shared information on the impending transfer of Humbug Valley and other tribal lands back to the Maidu people after more than a few years of committed effort.

The Maidu have a long-standing tradition of reaching out to the wider community, and the gathering was a perfect example of their hospitality and inclusion.

Working in collaboration with local and state agencies, the Maidu Summit Consortium seeks to ensure a brighter future for the next generation of Maidu people.

According to literature provided by the consortium's local Chester office, "There are a host of concerns that we have identified as we seek new ways to provide improved opportunities to the youth of our community. ... It is clear that our next generation of young people need contact with cultural practices and intergenerational learning forums that our forests, meadows and canyons provide.

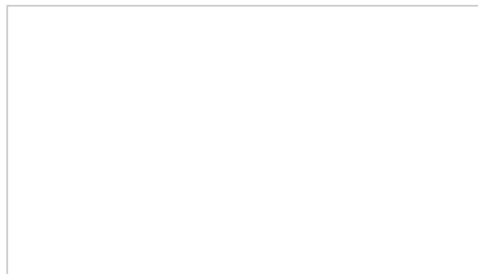
"Our duty is to build a network of empowered young Mountain Maidu culture carriers to help lead this work. This can only be achieved by granting our Elders the freedom to access natural resources they understand so well, so that they may pass on what they know."

In an interview, Holbrook shared the ecstatic news that, "We're on the verge of transferring Humbug Valley back to the Consortium," a complicated process that has already taken some 15 years of dedicated work, he said.

"We expect the conveyance of the land to be completed either by the end of 2018 or early next year, as we're still waiting for final approval by the California Public Utilities Commission," which has regulatory oversight.

In addition to Humbug Valley, there are five other parcels close to Lake Almanor, three that are near the lake, but there are still regulatory steps to complete prior to fee title transfer.

Two properties are located near the southern portion of Lake Almanor, including one in Prattville along highway 89.



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"We envision a cultural center to eventually be built on Prattville-Reservoir Road on the Butt Valley side of Highway 89," Holbrook stated, but confided such a project likely remained at least a decade away and would require several years of fundraising activity.

"Another parcel includes nearby Shady Grove Cemetery, a 1920s-era cemetery which also incorporates an ancient Maidu burial site," he said.

Two additional pieces of land are north of the causeway located near Last Chance Campground, one near Benner Creek and one at Mud Creek, located north of the causeway and Almanor West.

PG&E continues to work on setbacks to establish the final boundaries of the parcels before transferring ownership to the Consortium.

The Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council — or simply the Stewardship Council — was formed as a private nonprofit in 2004 as a result of a PG&E bankruptcy settlement, noted Heidi Krolick, Stewardship Council executive director.

As part of the settlement, the Stewardship Council has played a major role since its inception in facilitating the reacquisition of 2,325 pristine acres of Humbug Valley, along with the other ancestral lands located around Lake Almanor.

Krolick said that as part of the land conservation commitment, "there is a requirement to protect these lands with conservation easements, a legally binding document that attaches to the land no matter who owns it."

The easement protects the properties under the assignment of six "Beneficial Public Values."

The BPV's include preserving and enhancing natural habitat for fish, wildlife and plants; preservation of open space; outdoor recreation by



Maidu Elder Ben Cunningham is chairman of the Maidu Summit Consortium Board of Directors.

the general public; sustainable forestry; agricultural uses; and cultural and historic elements.

“PG&E retains ownership for those areas that are central to its hydroelectric operations,” Krolick continued, while making other lands that are not needed for those functions made available for donation to the Mountain Maidu.



Indian Cultural Demonstrator and Park Ranger Ben Cunningham-Summerfield and his wife Kimberly attend the Friends of Humbug Gathering and potluck at Yellow Creek Campground.

The board of the council makes recommendations for entities that are best qualified to own and manage the land, by working through a very detailed transaction process that has been ongoing now for several years at Humbug Valley.

The Stewardship Council recommended the Maidu Summit Consortium for ownership and long-term management of Humbug Valley and the other properties. The consortium was officially formed in 2003, but not until 2010 did it acquire its nonprofit status.

The Stewardship Council has invested a lot of time and effort in the consortium’s success, Krolick asserted, adding, “One of the really exciting things about the acquisition of Humbug Valley by the Maidu Summit Consortium is the partnerships that are formed.”

The conservation easements will be co-held by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Feather River Land Trust; both entities having a role to play in land management that will combine traditional Maidu ecological knowledge with modern scientific concepts.

For example, Krolick said that once or twice a year FRLT staff will visit the property to ensure that all of the Beneficial Public Values are being upheld and all activities are consistent with those values, adding that

CDFW has the expertise to work with the Maidu on the management of the Humbug property, particularly in regards to fishery resources, public recreation activities and the conservation of wildlife habitat.

“The final step is for any regulatory approvals —governed by the California Public Utilities Commission — be obtained before final conveyance of the lands can be transferred,” she said.

Krolick added that, “The Humbug Valley project has been extremely important to our board, which has also taken the opportunity to provide funding support to help build the Consortium’s capacity to take on the long-term ownership and stewardship of these lands. That’s something we’re really proud of.”

For more information on the Maidu Summit Consortium, to learn more about its goals and to join the Maidu Summit community, call 258-2299 or drop by 289 Main St. in Chester (in the Stover Creek Center next to the Holiday Market). To donate go to maidusummit.org.

Information on the Stewardship Council can be found at: stewardshipcouncil.org.