



## Defend Sáttítla Highlands National Monument



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### Proposal Questions

#### Mission/History Of Organization

We are an organization inspired to preserve, protect and restore our world-renowned mountain environment. Beginning in 1988, the Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center has played a pivotal role in preserving the integrity of

#### JEDI Efforts and Impact

Over the past year (and throughout our history), our organization has deepened our commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) by embedding these principles into every aspect of our work. Recognizing that

Mount Shasta, Medicine Lake Highlands, and surrounding forests and watersheds. Our bioregional perspective encompasses natural interconnected systems and cultural layers that constitute the human relationship to the land. What has emerged is widespread recognition of our region as a major natural sanctuary for its superlative beauty, high-quality waters, and Native American cultural significance.

environmental challenges disproportionately impact marginalized communities, we have focused on ensuring that our programs, policies, and partnerships reflect and amplify the voices of those most affected. We adapted our outreach and education programs to be more accessible and inclusive, incorporating multilingual materials, traditional ecological knowledge, and perspectives from historically excluded communities. Our partnerships, which have included all five Native American Tribes in our region, have expanded and we continue to build a more inclusive culture that values continuous learning and accountability. We recognize that JEDI work is ongoing, and we remain committed to evolving our approach to ensure environmental justice for all.

**Final Success**

Defending S attitla Highlands National Monument (SHNM) will assure future generations of visitors will be able to experience over 224,676 acres of scenic, culturally significant volcanic lands, an aquifer that stores an estimated 20-40 million acre-feet and annually yields over a million acre-feet of fresh spring water, creating a natural buffer to climate change for the entire state of California.

**Location Details**

The newly designated S attitla Highlands National Monument (SHNM) is a national treasure boasting pristine lakes and volcanic features. The azure waters of Medicine Lake are situated within a 500,000-year-old volcanic caldera. The region features exceptional biodiversity. Dark night skies and the absence of external noise sources make this monument one of exceptional star gazing and contemplation of nature. For at least 10,000 years, this landscape has held profound spiritual significance for the Pit River and Modoc Nations, as well as for distant tribes. Recognized by the National Register of Historic Places, the Medicine Lake Caldera and the volcano's uplift above the 6,000-foot elevation have been designated as a 73,000-acre Native American Traditional Cultural District. In 2007, the USFS established an extensive Historic Properties Management Program, collaborating with local Tribes and MSBEC to preserve this heritage by acknowledging the tribal cultural values and practices. This program will inform the new management plan called for by the SHNM proclamation. The well-being of the Highlands ecosystem is paramount to California's ability to adapt to climate change. As California experiences greater weather whiplash—swinging between very dry and very wet years, the Highlands provides a stable ecosystem and an immense source of cold clean water that flows all the way to San Francisco Bay and beyond via rivers and the state's vast agricultural systems. It plays a crucial role in habitat connectivity within the state's northern region, serving as a vital land bridge that connects the Lava Beds National Monument and Klamath National Wildlife Refuge to the north, Mount Lassen National Park to the south, two National Forests in the west (Klamath and Shasta-Trinity) and Modoc

National Forest and the Great Basin in the east. The Medicine Lake Recreation Area (a designation by the USFS) currently welcomes over 40,000 visitors annually, who engage in hiking, fishing, swimming, camping, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, mountain biking, and admiring the exceptional vistas of this enigmatic landscape. These attractions contribute significantly to the North State's tourism economy.

While this area remained under threat from geothermal development for decades, the final geothermal lease was surrendered immediately following the proclamation of SHNM which ends the industrial threat to this vital landscape forever.

**Biodiversity in Project Area**

Our actions to successfully defend SHNM include progress on a management plan that will set up lasting protections of these federal lands. Our work toward the Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRW) designation will ensure that water quality will not be degraded. Protecting the full 24,676 acres encompassed by the SHNM boundary will provide for connectivity with other areas (see #4 above) that are under the management of multiple federal agencies. Thus the landscape scale opportunity for regional protection of biodiversity and increased connectivity is immense. Our other protection work throughout this region focuses on forest health and resiliency to fires. As a result of the national monument designation, Tribal Nations will be able to implement their traditional ecological knowledge on the landscapes that they have stewarded for thousands of years.

The SHNM is a volcanic aquifer that supplies a steady flow of cold clean water to the Fall River Springs, the largest spring system in California and one of the largest in the world, which forms the Fall River. This dependable water source is vital to terrestrial and aquatic life and forms an ecosystem that Tribal Nations in the region continue to rely on for sustenance fishing. These waters continue to sustain a world-class trout fishery, a designated Heritage and Wild Trout Stream by the CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife). The waters make their way from the Fall River into the Pit River. The Pit River forms the largest arm of Shasta Lake Reservoir whose waters go on to supply a major portion of the irrigated lands of the Central Valley. The waters then meet the ocean in the Bay Delta, holding back saltwater intrusion from municipal drinking water wells, then flow into the ocean in San Francisco Bay. Volcanic spring systems will provide a natural buffer during drought and during wet winters will act as a huge storage system for snowmelt. This

**Expected Economic & Recreational Impact**

By defending SHNM, our region would begin to see more significant economic and outdoor recreational benefits for local communities while ensuring the long-term health of our natural landscapes. Protection of these key ecosystems not only safeguards biodiversity but also enhances opportunities for outdoor recreation—activities that foster a deep connection to land and water. Many of our rural communities see significant economic benefit as “gateways communities” for recreation. Adding to and protecting the existing opportunities that are available to visitors will allow our communities to pivot from the snare of extraction-based economies to conservation/recreation-based economies.

Fishing will continue to be available to future generations and the springs that emerge from the base of Medicine Lake Volcano dozens of miles from the lake, forming the Fall River, are home to an endemic trout that lures anglers from around the US. Hunters know this area for its large deer. The “X-1 Zone” is a difficult lottery for deer tags and this area would be preserved in perpetuity from development. Cross-country skiing and snowmobiling will be supported by the protection of forests and watersheds that help maintain snowpack and winter recreation areas for backcountry trails and the vast Tri-forest Snowmobile Trail Network. Camping and hiking in protected landscapes will provide more accessible, safe, and scenic spaces for campers and hikers to explore without the threat of industrialized development. Swimming and boating in clean lakes will be safer and more enjoyable.

By ensuring that these lands and waters remain healthy and accessible, our project will strengthen the connection between people and nature while fostering a sustainable outdoor economy. This is not just about protecting the environment—it's about securing a future where outdoor recreation, local

subsurface water must be protected from degradation while we learn more about how to predict its contributions to overall water demands.

### Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

Our organization is committed to our ongoing collaboration with the Pit River Nation in defending the boundary of the S ttitla Highlands National Monument and protecting the landscape's immense cultural, ecological, and hydrological importance from development. Our strategy integrates advocacy, community mobilization, and education to achieve lasting conservation during the next year.

**Community Engagement & Advocacy**  
•Engage with Local Officials, Community Leaders, and Business Owners – We will build coalitions with elected representatives, tribal leaders, and regional stakeholders to align on shared conservation goals.

•Mobilize Community Members – Through rallies, town halls, and public gatherings, we will ensure that voices advocating for protection are heard.

**Education & Awareness**

•Lead Educational Initiatives – We will host workshops, guided site visits, and digital campaigns to highlight the Highlands' significance—not only as a sacred landscape for Indigenous Peoples but also as a vital climate buffer that sustains biodiversity and provides clean water for millions downstream.

•Raise Awareness & Inspire Action – Through storytelling, social media, and direct outreach and education, we will reinforce the Highlands' critical role in cultural preservation, environmental resilience, and regional well-being.

**Policy & Protection**

•Strengthen Legal & Policy Frameworks – We will work closely with policymakers, our Tribal allies, conservation groups, and through our long-term working relationship with legal experts at Stanford Environmental Law Clinic to defend the national monument designation from attacks by the current administration.

•Unite Stakeholders & Secure Long-Term Stewardship – By fostering collaboration between Tribal Nations, local governments, and land management agencies, we will ensure the Highlands remain safeguarded for future generations.

•Through participation in the creation of a management plan for SHNM we will further Tribal co-management of the Highlands and help involve stakeholders in the Advisory Committee to ensure community support. Through our work toward designation of the Medicine Lake Volcanic Aquifer and Fall River Springs Hydrologic System as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRW), we will ensure adequate planning and protection to promote climate resiliency

livelihoods, and conservation go hand in hand.

### Key Decision Makers

We remain committed to the Pit River Nation's representatives taking the lead with high level discussions that are occurring with US Representative Doug LaMalfa. There have been some dialogues that have occurred between LaMalfa, Pit River Nation, and various other stakeholder groups representing resource extraction industries and the details of those conversations are not public. We continue to support the Tribe and offer strategic advice, while also drawing on our archives of information that form the scientifically defensible basis for the boundary of the monument as proclaimed by President Biden. US Senators Schiff and Padilla remain allies, and we are engaging Padilla's northern area staff to keep them informed of opportunities to visit and assist in SHNM's protection.

We have outreach going to new state assembly member Heather Hadwick and are offering to take her (or her staff) to the area this spring using over-snow vehicles. CA Senator Megan Dahle previously supported the state resolution to support the designation of SHNM (SJR 17) while she was in the Assembly and personally uses the area for recreation with her family. Our goal is to remain close with Ms Dahle and develop a relationship with Ms Hadwick so that our state political support system could be called on to reinforce the importance of the monument to our local communities should there be a federal level move to shrink the boundaries. We have had very broad support from the business community, and we have identified one area where we want to gain better relationships. The business "hub", called Siskiyou Economic Development Council, focuses primarily on agriculture and forestry job development. We are engaged on a climate resiliency project with them, so we have a professional working relationship. We have invited them on our spring tour so they can get footage for their social media branch, "Discover Siskiyou", that promotes tourism in Siskiyou County.

and biodiversity. ONRW designation was identified in California's Pathways to 30x30 as a means to protect biodiversity and contribute to the international goal of preserving 30% of the land by 2030.

#### Our Role

As a nonprofit conservation organization, we will:

- Lead grassroots advocacy and mobilization efforts to assure continued support for the Pit River Nation.
- Provide expertise in environmental policy and legal protections through our ongoing work with Stanford Environmental Law Clinic and Resource Legacy Fund.
- Empower communities with the knowledge and tools to take action and participate in the resource management planning process.
- Advocate for long-term resource management solutions that uphold ecological, hydrological, and cultural integrity.

#### Final Success

Success for permanent protection of the S ttitla Highlands National Monument means ensuring that its sacred lands, wildlife, and water resources remain intact and the boundary unchanged. By mobilizing communities, engaging decision-makers, and fostering deep public appreciation, we will create a legacy of supporting Pit River Nation, stewardship, and sustainability.

#### Elevate Voices

With S ttitla Highlands National Monument now established, our focus is on ensuring its long-term protection by continuing to uplift Indigenous Nations and other underrepresented voices who have fought for decades to safeguard this sacred landscape.

#### Collaborative Advocacy & Defense

- We continue working alongside the Pit River Nation and Modoc Nation, honoring their leadership in protecting the Highlands.
- We support Tribally-led co-management efforts, ensuring Indigenous knowledge guides conservation, access, and stewardship.
- Our coalition, including local communities and conservation allies, remains vigilant against threats such as resource extraction from proposed mining, directional geothermal drilling, and policy rollbacks.

#### Community Engagement & Mobilization

- We will organize town halls, cultural gatherings, and advocacy campaigns to ensure Tribal voices remain central in monument management.
- We will work with local business owners, outdoor recreation groups, and conservation partners to strengthen public support.
- We will continue legal and policy advocacy at the state and federal levels to uphold protections and prevent

#### Measurable On-Ground Outcomes

- Organize and mobilize at least 500 community members for at least 3 rallies, town halls, and other gatherings to ensure that voices advocating for protection are heard.
- We will lead at least 3 educational initiatives to highlight the monument's profound significance as a sacred landscape for Indigenous Peoples and also as a vital climate buffer that sustains biodiversity and provides clean water for millions downstream. We are currently in process with the Mount Shasta Sisson Museum to create an exhibit and give a presentation in 2025.
- We will plan and lead at least 3 curated trips to SHNM once snow melts in late June/early July. We will host community members and elected officials on field trips to explore the monument.
- We will document our engagement with the Central Valley Regional Quality Control Board to move the ONRW designation forward now that our request was successful in January 2025 to elevate this project to a higher priority within the Basin Plan.



weakening of the monument's safeguards.

**Our Commitment**

Sáttítla Highlands is now protected, but our work is far from over. By amplifying Indigenous leadership, uniting diverse stakeholders, participating in management planning, mobilizing communities, and safeguarding its waters, we are committed to defending the monument for future generations.

**TCA Funding Plan**

Support from TCA will allow MSBEC to leverage its history of collaboration with the Indigenous-led movement for permanent safeguarding of the Sáttítla Highlands National Monument designation. We will continue our decades of engagement with rural communities who have come to recognize the importance of this "legacy" project that began in 1997. Support for our staff will leverage our 27+ years of experience with the landscape, waters, and Tribal allies to contribute to future management through work on the management plan and ONRW designation. We will continue to build on the support within our communities of the needs and values of conservation and acknowledgement of the cultural significance of geographic landmarks in our bioregion. Most of the work happens at a grassroots level, but we will also be engaging with regional city and state officials to make sure that our network of support remains informed and readied for proactive and/or defensive actions.

**How long it took to complete application**

**Confidential Items**

This proposal can be freely shared with member companies.

**Other Relevant Application Details**

