

# CULTURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION



## Importance of Cultural Resource Protection

Just as public and private cemeteries with tombstones deserve protection from desecration, so do the burial grounds of Native Americans. The only difference is that Native burials often lack above-ground markers. However, Native Americans trained in cultural resource protection are able to identify locations likely to contain such burials. And many California tribes, like Yocha Dehe, work to protect sacred sites from disturbance and desecration resulting from development.

In this work, tribes are armed with the power of state and federal laws, and the support of a state agency called the Native American Heritage Commission. Tribes usually protect cultural resources in their ancestral territories, the areas where their people lived before the European invasion.

The Commission recognized Yocha Dehe (along with its sister Patwin tribes, Kletsel Dehe and Cachil Dehe) has standing to protect the cultural resources buried in Solano County, which is part of the area where the Patwin peoples' ancestors once lived and buried their dead.

## SITE OF AN HISTORIC CULTURAL EASEMENT

The development of the Glen Cove waterfront park in the City of Vallejo sparked controversy in 2011 because it was likely to disturb the remains of Native people long ago buried there. Protestors assembled and refused to leave, blocking the park's construction.

Two Patwin tribal governments—the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation and Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation —helped the City of Vallejo resolve the situation by negotiating a cultural easement that ensured no Indian remains would be disturbed while enabling a scaled back, less intrusive park project to proceed.

The easement is the first of its kind to be held directly by California tribal governments. It empowers these tribes to not only protect Glen Cove from depredation, but also to practice ceremonies at the site.

The use of cultural easements to protect cultural resources is on the rise. Yocha Dehe has acquired other cultural easements after the one at Glen Cove, including one with Yolo County.

