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Indigenous Nations Rally to Protect Medicine Lake from Geothermal Desecration Federal Appeals Court Hearing March 12 in San Francisco, CA

Ceremonial sunrise gathering, march, rally, and press conference Immediately following hearing on courthouse steps.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA -- On Thursday, March 12, 2015 a federal appeals court will hear arguments in a legal battle to protect the sacred Medicine Lake Highlands from threats of geothermal desecration. The Medicine Lake Highlands are held sacred by Pit River, Wintu, Karuk, Shasta and Modoc nations.

From time immemorial, Indigenous people have made pilgrimages to the Highlands for healing, religious ceremony, and tribal gatherings. However, for more than 25 years, Calpine Energy Corporation, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and United States Forest Service have attempted to desecrate and destroy this precious place of deep religious significance, with five proposed geothermal power projects. At issue are 26 geothermal leases, originally executed by BLM in the 1980s with only cursory environmental review and no tribal consultation.

On July 30, 2013 a lower court decided against environmentalists and Indigenous peoples in their legal challenge of geothermal lease renewals affecting the sacred Medicine Lake Highlands. The Stanford Environmental Law Clinic, which represents Native Tribes and environmental groups in the case, has appealed this adverse decision to the Ninth Circuit Court. The previous Ninth Circuit Court decision resulted in revoking the lease renewals for the first of two 49-megawatt projects.

If approved, industrial-scale geothermal development would desecrate the Medicine Lake Highlands, threaten underlying aquifer and result in the injection of toxins into the atmosphere and waters. It would have a devastating impact on deeply-held religious views and practices, traditional cultural values, pristine environmental resources, and rare opportunities for recreation.

The President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation ("ACHP") has explained, "multiple lines of evidence substantiate the historic and continuing value of the Medicine Lake area and the volcanic caldera it rests in to [the Pit River Tribe and other] Native Americans in maintaining their traditional cultural integrity".

What: Federal Appeals Court hearing. Ceremonial sunrise gathering, march, rally, and press conference immediately following hearing on courthouse steps.

Who: Pit River Tribe, Native Coalition for Medicine Lake Highlands Defense, Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center, Save Medicine Lake Coalition, Medicine Lake Citizens for Quality Environment, Plaintiffs-Appellants; vs. US Bureau of Land Management, Department of Interior, Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, & Calpine Corporation, Defendants-Appellees.

When: Thursday March 12, 2015

7AM: Sunrise Prayer Vigil Ceremonial gathering at Yerba Buena Gardens 4th and Howard near the courthouse, SF. Welcoming by Ohlone representatives in Yalamu territory. All are welcome to attend.

8 AM: Protect Water & Sacred Sites, Defend Human Rights March from Yerba Buena Park going to the James R. Browning US Courthouse - 9th Circuit; 95 Seventh Street; San Francisco, CA

9:30 AM: Rally & Prayers outside the Courthouse.

11:30AM-12:30 PM: Court Hearing. Room 3 on the 3rd floor

12:30 -12:45 PM: Press Conference on the steps of the 9th Circuit courthouse immediately after the hearing.

Where: United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit
95 7th St, San Francisco, CA 94103; Courtroom 3

The Medicine Lake Highlands, also sacredly known to the Pit River People, the lead plaintiffs, as "Saht Tit Lah" (Obsidian Knife Lake) has been a place of special significance. To this day, Indigenous people come from near and far to utilize this sacred place on a regular basis for healing, religious ceremony, and tribal gatherings.

The Medicine Lake Highlands continue to face destructive geothermal development by Calpine Energy Corporation. Five new proposed geothermal power plant projects threaten to poison the sacred waters of Medicine Lake.

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