

Briefing Materials

Prepared for the Oct. 4, 2024

**Meeting of the Sustaining Natural
and Cultural Resources**

**Subcommittee of the California
Agricultural Land Equity Task Force**

The Sustaining Natural and Cultural Resources Subcommittee (Subcommittee) of the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force (Task Force) was established on May 9, 2024. Subcommittee members include Emily Burgueno, Darlene Franco, Lawrence Harlan, and Thea Rittenhouse.

Context

At the first Subcommittee meeting in July 2024, members expressed an interest in exploring the histories of land theft and pathways to address existing injustices by advancing Native sovereignty and respect for ancestral relationships with land. As one step toward these goals, staff have compiled a list of existing resources from the Redbud Resource Group that this Subcommittee may wish to review. Members can expect to discuss how these resources may inform the work and priorities of this Subcommittee and the Task Force more broadly during the second Subcommittee meeting on October 4, 2024.

Redbud Resource Group Materials

The [Redbud Resource Group](#) “helps improve public health outcomes for Native American communities through education, research, and community partnership.”

Redbud also “helps organizations, institutions, and employers become valued partners with Native peoples and their communities” through a wide range of trainings, curriculum and other resources, some of which are outlined below.

In addition to many other resources on the Redbud Resource Group’s website, the following have been identified by staff as particularly pertinent to the work of this Subcommittee and the Task Force.

Land Back Spider Graph

The [Land Back Spider Graph tool](#) is designed to evaluate different approaches to the land return process and assess the strengths and weaknesses of various land return projects and initiatives. People and organizations can use the spider graph as a tool to guide five different areas of returning land, as outlined by Redbud:

1. Ownership (who owns the land);
2. Leadership (who's leading the efforts);
3. Stewardship (how the land is looked after);
4. Access (who can use the land); and
5. Consultation (seeking advice and guidance from knowledgeable individuals).

The website includes insightful examples about how to apply this tool to real-world projects in addition to reflection questions and discussion prompts related to each area listed above.

Reflection & Discussion

Staff propose that Subcommittee members consider how this Spider Graph compares with the “dimensions of land equity” as discussed by the Task Force thus far. Additionally, please consider: Are there elements of this approach that could be included in the Task Force’s final report? Which parts of the Spider Graph would be important for government agencies and other organizations to incorporate when supporting land return projects?

Policy Timelines

This [Policy Timelines page](#) highlights the timelines and enabling policies and projects that contributed to ecocide, family separation, and land loss since the 1400s through today.

Ecocide Diagram

The section on ecocide outlines the connected aspects of environmental destruction, including the rejection of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and the Religious Crimes Code of 1883 that criminalized traditional practices and ceremonies. Hydraulic mining, the introduction of cattle and invasive species, and California's State Water Project are also explained as contributing factors.

Family Separation

The family separation timeline begins with the mission system in the 1700s and goes through the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978. This timeline describes the various forms of state violence against CA Native American tribes, Native children, and families associated with policies and programs of the mission system and the federal government.

Land Loss Timeline

The land loss timeline covers the Colonial Period, starting in 1598, to the 2000's and today as Native American people continue to fight for and advance their sovereignty. The timeline notes the different waves of colonization, the process of removal and dispossession under the Homestead Act, and the periods of reservations and allotments in the 1800s. By the early 1900s, "more than 100 million acres of Native land was lost, and 100,000 Natives were landless." The early 1900s were marked by the Indian Reorganization Act and the Indian Claims Commission, while the 1960s and 1970s were marked by Native people fighting to regain rights taken from them .

Reflection & Discussion

The information above may provide an initial understanding of the various histories and policies that have worked to violently dispossess CA Natives of their land and traditional practices. Are there parts of the timelines provided by Redbud Resource Group that the Subcommittee would like to include in the Task Force's final report? What additional histories and stories does this Subcommittee wish to emphasize in the context of land equity?

Land Easements

Redbud Resource Group defines an [easement](#) as “a legal agreement that grants individuals or organizations the right to use or protect a specific property.” This resource describes how easements can be used as a tool to increase Native land access and support cultural restoration and Indigenous traditions. If designed properly, a collaborative easement can foster a relationship among Tribes, government agencies, and conservation organizations by including dialogue, respect for Indigenous sovereignty, and financial assistance for managing the land.

An easement can include the continuation of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) practices and give Native communities decision-making authority on the land.

[Restoring Tribal Access to Land: A Menu of Options to Reestablish Cultural Access Rights](#) outlines various types of easements and places them on a spectrum of different strategies to restore access to land for Native American tribes.

Reflection & Discussion

Are there solutions from the “menu of options” that this Subcommittee wishes to elevate? Are there elements of the easements described that could be applied to agricultural easements? Easements are also a current focus of the Land Use Governance and Sovereignty Subcommittee.