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Christy Fischer
Executive Director
Santa Lucia Conservancy
26700 Rancho San Carlos Rd
Carmel, CA 93923

Christy,

Thank you for bringing to my attention the bank stabilization project proposed for the south bank of the Carmel River just west of the Rancho San Carlos bridge crossing. I am devastated by this news, as this could potentially wipe out a significant plant resource (*Carex barbarae*) that is culturally vital to the continuity of local Rumsen Ohlone Native American basketry. While there are many *Carex* species, the Santa Barbara or "white root" sedge is the only local species suitable for basketry, and the one used traditionally throughout much of California.

As you know, I am a descendant of the Rumsen Ohlone, the native people of lower Carmel Valley, Point Lobos, and Monterey. Our basketry traditions had essentially vanished, the result of the Spanish missions and other cultural impacts that followed. Many cultural traditions had to be abandoned or were impossible to maintain. Our last basketweavers died in the latter part of the 19th century, and only a couple dozen of our old baskets are known to still exist today.

I am 68 years old and have spent the past 30 years researching and making our traditional baskets, some of which take more than a year of painstaking labor to create. I traveled as far as the east coast and to Europe to study some of our old baskets. Over the years, I have become a master weaver recognized throughout the state and nationally. I was invited by the Smithsonian to demonstrate Ohlone basketry for a week at their 2006 Folklife Festival. The British Museum in London features me in their gallery dedicated to American Indian culture. Baskets made with sedge material from this very Carmel River patch are part of permanent collections of the Oakland Museum, San Francisco Presidio (National Park Service) and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. I mention this only to illustrate that these baskets, and the unusual skill required to make them, are widely recognized and valued as part of our local history and heritage.

The baskets are also important for our Rumsen community. Although I have made a few baskets for museum collections, the majority are for our own use as we practice our traditional skills and prepare our traditional foods together. I have been able to teach aspects of our basketry to

others throughout the years, teaching the techniques of harvesting sedge in this very location. We hope that our basketry won't have to disappear again for lack of the native plant materials necessary to make them. We hope these plants will be here for the next generation and the ones that follow.

After searching for a good source of this sedge species (*Carex barbarae*) for about 20 years, it was truly amazing to finally learn of this patch along the river – at the edge of our ancestral village site of Tucutnut! I have been harvesting the rhizomes here for nearly a decade and it is the best I have ever encountered. I also learned through my ethnographic research that this is the very area our basket makers gathered the sedge roots for their baskets – because the sandy conditions produced such beautiful, long runners, as they still do today.

I have found very small amounts of this sedge species in other Carmel Valley locations, but never in the necessary quantity and deep, sandy deposits of this location. Growth in sand permits the plants to produce the long, straight rhizomes required in basketry. And the large plant bed is necessary for harvesting in rotation, allowing a new generation of rhizomes to grow for a year or more after a particular section has been harvested. When one section is being harvested, others are regenerating new underground runners. The harvesting of these underground stems does not interfere with the growth of the plants or their ability to stabilize the land. In fact, I've noticed over the years that routine harvesting makes for a healthier sedge community, for we hand remove non-native weeds in the process, and help keep the plants free of accumulated dead foliage from past seasons.

When French visitor Abel du Petit-Thouars visited Monterey in October of 1837, he remarked: "These natives make baskets so closely woven that they hold water, which they use to cook their food. To do this they boil the water by plunging red-hot stones into it one after another to introduce the necessary heat. They also make baskets in the form of plates and graceful cups which they ornament on the outside with black feathers from the topknots of the California partridge, with other feathers of different colors and with little pearly shells."

We lost our beautiful baskets once, and those that survived are now primarily in European museum collections. But now that we are producing them in our community again, they are valued as cultural icons and works of art. In 2012 I was recognized by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors for restoring the art of Ohlone basketry and cultivating public awareness and respect for Rumsen Ohlone history. In 2013 I was awarded the California Indian Heritage Preservation Award by the Society for California Archaeology. And earlier this month I was honored by the Monterey County Historical Society with their 11th Annual Historic Community Award for my work to preserve and promote local Rumsen language and culture. I point out this recognition not to try to elevate myself, but to put the importance of this traditional art, and the native plants upon which it depends, in a larger historic, cultural, and educational context.

This is an irreplaceable resource worthy of great effort to preserve. I hope we can find a way to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jenda Glemane". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.