



## TWENTY-NINE PALMS BAND OF MISSION INDIANS

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September 13, 2016

Gita Kapahi  
California State Water Resources Control Board  
[via email]



Re: Beneficial Uses Development for Tribal Traditional and Cultural Use and Tribal Subsistence Fishing

Dear Ms. Kapahi,

The Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians (Tribe) appreciates the State Water Resources Control Board's recent efforts to create Beneficial Uses specifically protective of tribal needs. Native Americans are often submerged in the natural environment through their traditional life ways and cultural practices, and therefore may accumulate higher levels of exposure to environmental pollutants. Beneficial Uses which are protective of tribes in using their traditional resources will foster healthy tribal communities in California.

The Whitewater River passes through the Twenty-Nine Palms Indian Reservation, which is located in southern California. Many plants and animals found living in the water and along the banks of the River have cultural significance to the historic and contemporary Chemehuevi and Cahuilla peoples that make up the membership of the Tribe today. The Tribe continues to use these resources in cultural traditional practices such as willow harvesting for basket weaving. Other cultural practices require contact with the water, such as submersion of Arrowweed in the arrow-making process, or harvesting Cat-tail roots, which are a traditional food source. These activities often include specific locations, time frames, and resources which are not interchangeable, rendering many of the current Beneficial Uses inadequate to protect the native demographic.

The Tribe believes the following proposed Beneficial Uses language will facilitate coordination of activities which aim to protect tribes from degraded water quality:

**Tribal Traditional & Cultural**

*Uses of water that support the cultural, spiritual, ceremonial, traditional rights and/or lifeways of California Native American Tribes, including, but not limited to: ceremonies, navigational activities, and fishing, gathering, and/or consumption of natural aquatic resources, including but not limited to fish, shellfish, vegetation, and materials, as affirmed by California Native American Tribe(s).*

**Tribal Subsistence Fishing**

*Uses of water that support the catching or gathering of natural aquatic resources, including but not limited to fish and shellfish, by California Native Americans, for consumption by individuals, households, and/or communities to meet fundamental needs for sustenance.*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this matter. Please contact the Twenty-Nine Palms Environmental Coordinator, Shawn Muir, at (760) 398-6767 should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Darrell Mike".

Darrell Mike  
Tribal Chairman

cc. Shawn Muir, Twenty-Nine Palms Tribal EPA