



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 5, 2014

CONTACT:

Mati Waiya, 805-794-1248

Luhui Isha Waiya, 805.729.7692

Jason Weiner, 805-823-3301

Wishtoyo Foundation's and the Chumash Community's Victory Before the California Public Utilities Commission ("CPUC") Thwarts Channel Islands Telephone Company's Attempt to Install Unneeded Telecommunications Infrastructure on the Channel Islands that Would Harm Chumash Heritage and the Environment

Channel Islands, Ventura County, CA – Wishtoyo Foundation's Protest filed with the California Public Utilities Commission ("CPUC") on September 3, 2013 resulted in an important victory to preserve Chumash heritage, and all those who cherish a pristine Channel Islands with flourishing wildlife.

Decision 14-02-026, issued by the CPUC on February 28, 2014, accepted the withdrawal of the application by the Channel Islands Telephone Company to develop the Channel Islands, the homeland and sacred ground of the Chumash, with additional cell phone towers, base stations, and other telecommunications facilities ("Proposed Project").

As detailed in Wishtoyo's Protest, Prehearing Conference filings supplementing its Protest, and in the complaints from numerous Chumash community members who filled the CPUC prehearing conference room, the Proposed Project would have impacted the cultural resources of Chumash Peoples' homeland that the Chumash People and Wishtoyo's members continue to utilize for religious, sacred, ceremonial, and cultural uses, and depend upon to maintain their culture and traditional life ways. Wishtoyo's Protest and the united opposition from the Chumash, forced the withdrawal of the Proposed Project Application which Wishtoyo alleged would have violated the California Public Utilities Code and the California Environmental Quality Act if approved.

Not only would the Project have imparted irreversible impacts to Chumash cultural landscapes, Chumash natural wildlife related cultural resources, and other Chumash cultural resources such as burial, village, historical, and sacred sites, but the Chumash Community and the federally recognized Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians were not provided with an opportunity to review and comment on the amended Project's impacts to Chumash cultural heritage before the CPUC.

“The Channel Islands are the place of origin of the Chumash People. Our ancestors lived in harmony with the natural island environment for over 13,000 years before removal by foreign forces. After the ancestors removal, the foreigners established the ranching of domestic animals; cattle, sheep, and pigs which destroyed sacred sites, burial sites, many endemic species of plants and animals from the natural environment. It has taken a few decades to remove the devastation of the ranching era and provide protection to restore the Islands close to their previous pristine state and protect innumerable sacred sites,” explains Mati Waiya, Chumash Ceremonial Elder and Executive Director of Wishtoyo.

As expressed by Mr. Waiya, “The Channel Islands Telephone Company (“CITC”) has shown great insensitivity and ignorance to the history and preservation of the home of our ancestors which has been preserved for all people. With the withdraw of CITC’s development project, all visitors will continue to enjoy this Traditional Cultural Landscape - the home of the Chumash People.”

About The Wishtoyo Foundation: Founded in 1997, Wishtoyo is a 501(c)(3) non-profit grassroots organization with over 700 members consisting of Ventura County’s diverse residents and Chumash Native Americans. Wishtoyo’s mission is to preserve and protect Chumash culture, the culture of all of Ventura County’s diverse communities, and the environment that our current and future generations depend upon. Wishtoyo shares traditional Chumash Native American beliefs, cultural practices, songs, dances, stories, and values with the public at its Chumash Discovery Village and through educational programs to promote environmental awareness and natural resources stewardship. **For more information about Wishtoyo Foundation and Visit: www.wishtoyo.org.**