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## PRESS RELEASE

### 320 Acres of Ancestral Lands Donated to Indigenous Group by Local Land Trust

**Coloma, CA. June 16, 2025** - American River Conservancy (ARC) has completed the first successful transfer of ancestral lands in El Dorado County to the Native-led conservation nonprofit Cosumnes Culture and WaterWays (CCAWW). Escrow closed on May 30, 2025, and was the result of many years of partnership, careful planning, fundraising, and an inspired effort on the part of all parties.

Located along the North Fork Cosumnes River in El Dorado County in the Ancestral Homelands of the El Dorado Band of Miwok, the donated land will provide an opportunity for local Indigenous people to reclaim a piece of their land-based ceremonial and cultural practices and renew the Tribe's relationship with the land and its more-than-human kin.

ARC purchased and permanently protected the 320-acre property known as "Ladies Valley" in 2008 for approximately \$2.8 Million with funding from Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), and Resources Legacy Fund (RLF). Soon after acquiring the property, ARC and members of the Tribe embarked on a decades-long partnership to complete habitat restoration projects, advance co-management of the land, and explore opportunities for cultural resource protection. In 2013, the nonprofit CCAWW was formed to facilitate the Tribe's future ownership and management of the land. In 2022, American River Conservancy raised over \$25,000 to assist CCAWW with ongoing land management. "It is deeply satisfying to be able to return ancestral lands to the original stewards," stated ARC Executive Director Elena DeLacy. "Transitioning the land to Indigenous ownership has been an illuminating and relationship-centric process that has allowed our organization to empower and support Indigenous leadership in the region."

"This is more than just a land transfer. It is reconnecting our relationships with the land and waterways and every living thing," said Kimberly ShiningStar Petree, executive director of CCAWW. "It is a profound and humbling experience to receive the land back after more than a century of being dispossessed and disconnected. The land is healing, and we are grateful."

"The Wildlife Conservation Board is proud to support the return of this culturally and environmentally significant landscape through strong partnerships with Indigenous leaders and conservation organizations," said Jennifer Norris, executive director of the Wildlife Conservation Board. "Protecting Ladies Valley not only strengthens habitat connectivity and biodiversity along the Cosumnes River but also helps build landscape-scale resilience in the face of climate change."

"We appreciate the investments made by WCB, CNRA, and RLF, to protect the significant cultural and natural resources at the Ladies Valley property, and for their support with the transfer process," noted ARC President Kyle Pogue. "We look forward to continuing this rewarding work with our Indigenous partners. This is just the beginning."

As a conservation organization based in California's upper American River and upper Cosumnes River watersheds, ARC works within the land and waters that make up the ancestral homelands of the Miwok, Nisenan, and Washoe people. Since 1989, American River Conservancy has completed 90 conservation projects protecting over 30,800 acres of native fisheries, endangered species habitat, cultural resources, rangelands, and recreational lands. ARC stewards 15,000 acres and provides interpretive hikes, educational programs to schools, and volunteer opportunities in the greater Sacramento metropolitan region. Donate, volunteer, and learn more about ARC at [www.arconservancy.org](http://www.arconservancy.org)

Since its founding in 2013, CCAWW has worked tirelessly to protect and revitalize the lands, waters, and cultural lifeways of the Miwok and Nisenan people. Through ceremony, education, advocacy, and direct action, CCAWW has become a cornerstone of Indigenous-led land and water protection efforts across the Cosumnes River watershed. CCAWW invites the public to stand with Indigenous land stewards and help expand its efforts. To learn more and support the work of CCAWW, please visit [www.ccaww.org](http://www.ccaww.org)

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