

AMAH MUTSUN LAND TRUST HIRES FIRST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

EkOngKar Singh Khalsa Assumes leadership Role on October 1, 2016

Trust Plans to Expand its Land Stewardship Work in Santa Cruz County

Santa Cruz, California--Valentin Lopez, Chairman of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and President of the Amah Mutsun Land Trust, announced today the hiring of EkOngKar Singh (EK) Khalsa to become the land trust's first Executive Director. Chairman Lopez said, "We are very excited to have a seasoned and highly skilled non-profit professional and real estate executive lead our land trust. We have to get back to caring for the land and indigenous land stewardship maybe the best way to create a healthy, resilient, and sustainable nature landscape for all to experience and enjoy. The Creator never rescinded our obligation to do that and with EK as our new staff leader, we are confident that we can expand our land stewardship activities while sharing what we learn with others."

EkOngKar Singh Khalsa has been Executive Director of the Mystic River Watershed Association in Arlington, Massachusetts for eight years. During that time he led major restoration efforts in the Mystic River Watershed, secured more than \$3 million in private and public support, and engaged over 1,200 volunteers, while increasing staff capacity, expanding the Association's budget, and working with multiple partners and community-based organizations to implement on/the-ground conservation projects.

The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) was founded in 1972 to "protect and restore the Mystic River, its tributaries and watershed lands for the benefit of present and future generations and to celebrate the value, importance and great beauty of these natural resources." Under EK's leadership, the Watershed Association received funding to begin the Mystic River Greenways Project, catalyzing the renewal of waterfront park space, and, developed a new grading system for the annual U.S. EPA-issued Mystic River Water Quality Report Card. The new grading system based upon data collected by MyRWA volunteers and professional staff provides nuanced water quality information that is used by all stakeholders to assess the health of the river and by State and Federal regulators to take enforcement action. The Association also advocated for the passage of the Mystic River Watershed Water Quality Commission, which was established by State Legislature, cleared 90% of the invasive water chestnut from the Mystic River, and was awarded the 2014 Education and Public Service Award by the Board of Directors of the Universities Council on Water Resources.

Prior to joining the Mystic River Watershed Association, Mr. Khalsa served as Director of Real Estate Development at the Hallmark Companies where he managed a diverse and complex residential, commercial, and mixed-use land acquisition and development project portfolio valued at over \$155 million.

EkOngKar Singh Khalsa has studied land planning and real estate management at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design and has advanced certifications in real estate investment analysis and hazardous waste management studies from Boston and Northeastern Universities.

Mr. Khalsa said, "I am humbled and very proud to be the Amah Mutsun Land Trust's first executive director. It is my prayer that I can provide strong support for the Land Trust's important mission. What an extraordinary moment it is for the Tribe and for its vision for the future. I look forward to working with Chairman Lopez, the Land Trust directors and associates, the Tribal Council, and our many partners and friends to demonstrate the benefits of indigenous land stewardship, protecting sacred sites, and connecting people, especially native people, to the places they call home."

Mr. Khalsa plans to relocate to the San Francisco Bay Area starting October 1, 2016.

The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band, in cooperation with the Sempervirens Fund, established the Amah Mutsun Land Trust in 2013. AMLT is a tax-exempt charitable organization dedicated to conserving and restoring natural lands within the Mutsun homelands, to practicing indigenous land stewardship that respects all life and encourages native flora and fauna, and to conducting archeological and ecological research in partnership with UC Berkeley and others and to sharing this information to increase our knowledge of how native people lived and used the land prior to European contact.

The Amah Mutsun historic territory extends from Año Nuevo Point south to Pinnacles National Park and includes much of the Santa Cruz Mountains and its watersheds.

If you wish to meet Mr. Khalsa and hear his thoughts and plans for the Land Trust, please attend the Tule hut and Amah Mutsun Garden presentation at Pie Ranch on Saturday, November 5, starting at 2:00 PM. For ticket reservations, please go to <http://amahmutsun.org/land-trust/land-trust-newsevents>. Space is limited.

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