Tuluwat Village is located on Indian Island in Humboldt Bay in northern California. It is a historically significant site that has been the cultural and spiritual home of the Wiyot people for hundreds of years. This is also where the Wiyot Tribe held its World Renewal ceremony, an annual traditional honoring of tribal ancestors. Extensive collaboration between the Wiyot Tribe and local, state and federal agencies, including EPA, has made major cultural and environmental restoration efforts possible here.

Beginning in the 1850s, settlers drove the Wiyot from Indian Island. This campaign culminated in a massacre in 1860. The few survivors were forcibly moved to a reservation. Then, between the 1870s and 1990, a dry dock and ship repair facility operated on the site. Shipyard operations and contamination from paints, solvents, metals and petroleum products impacted the 1.5-acre area. This prevented the Wiyot Tribe from returning to its ancestral lands.

In 2000, the Wiyot Tribe purchased the contaminated site property. In 2004, the city of Eureka deeded the surrounding 40 acres to the tribe. For more than a decade, the Wiyot Tribe worked to leverage more than $2.8 million in state and federal resources to clean up the site. EPA
assistance included a $200,000 brownfield cleanup grant in 2004, a review of site cleanup plans and a $508,000 time-critical removal action. Cleanup efforts included the removal of leaking boat batteries, extensive soil excavation and installation of a multi-layered vegetated cap. Archaeologists monitored the cleanup process to ensure preservation of excavated artifacts.

In 2013, the Wiyot Tribe held the World Renewal ceremony on the site for the first time in more than 150 years, formally re-establishing the tribe’s cultural connections to Tuluwat. Looking to the future, the tribe’s plans for the site include dance and tribal gathering areas, cultural display buildings, a restored dock and canoe landing area, a fire ring, an interpretive trail and camp kitchen facilities.

EPA continues to take action to address tribal concerns. In January 2017, EPA issued a memorandum (available at https://semspub.epa.gov/src/document/HQ/500024668.pdf) providing recommendations for considering tribal treaty rights, treaty-protected resources and traditional ecological knowledge during Superfund activities.

“This is the center of our world. This is where we hold the dances that make us whole, that make us be better people and put the world right, and to begin anew each year.”

– Cheryl Seidner, former Tribal Chairwoman of the Table Bluff Wiyot Reservation

EPA transferring clean fill to the site (Source: EPA)

The shellmound on site, a repository for hundreds of years of Wiyot Tribe history. (Source: EPA)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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