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AMAH MUTSUN LAND TRUST HIRES NEW LEADER

Dr. Catherine Griffin, a network and community builder and former leader of California Indian Legal Services, selected as Executive Director

New Director promises to protect sacred sites, restore native habitat, and mentor Native youth as future land trust leaders

Santa Cruz, California – Valentin Lopez, Amah Mutsun Land Trust’s President and Chairman of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band announced today that Catherine “Kate” Griffin was selected to become the Land Trust’s next Executive Director. After an extensive search, Chairman Lopez said: “We are very excited to have Dr. Griffin as our Executive Director. She is a seasoned and successful nonprofit leader and has extensive experience in operating, fundraising, and transforming nonprofit organizations into becoming better and more effective. We couldn’t be more pleased to have her join our terrific team.”

Dr. Griffin worked for California Indian Legal Services for 8 years in a variety of positions, including two years as Executive Director. President Lopez said: “She understands the historic trauma Native people have suffered and the contemporary cultural and political challenges they face. This combination of cultural understanding and nonprofit acumen was exactly what we were looking for.”

Dr. Griffin is passionate about improving the health and well being of Native people and providing mentoring and leadership opportunities for Tribal members. She

said: “I would be honored to serve as AMLT’s Executive Director and to be in partnership with the Tribe, the Land Trust, its staff and allies in work that promotes the Amah Mutsun people and the cultural and spiritual stewardship of their Territory.”

Before joining AMLT, Dr. Griffin was a Network and Community Builder for Bringing Theory to Practice, a National Higher Educational Initiative hosted by Elon University in North Carolina. She has also held a variety of leadership roles in both rural and urban nonprofit organizations focused on improving internal operations, innovation, learning, and transforming big ideas into on the ground achievements. Dr. Griffin has a Ph.D from the University of Minnesota in American Studies. Her dissertation was on “Politics and Place in African American and American Indian Women’s Literature.”

The Amah Mutsun Land Trust was established in 2014, to protect and conserve sacred sites, restore and steward native ecosystems, and research and share information about Mutsun history, culture, traditions, and ceremonies that were lost with the brutal removal from their homelands by the Spanish and the genocide that continued during the Mexican and American periods.

AMLT is an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization governed by a Board of Directors, the majority of which are appointed by Amah Mutsun Tribal Council. AMLT holds two conservation easements and is currently developing a Cultural Conservation Easement at the 500-acre Nyland Ranch in San Benito County in conjunction with The Trust for Public Land, the Land Trust for Santa Cruz County, and the San Benito Agricultural Land Trust.

AMLT also works very closely with the California Department of Parks and Recreation on a variety of projects, including at Quiroste Valley State Cultural Preserve, which is dedicated to preserving Indigenous history and culture.

AMLT also manages a Native Stewardship Corps that reduces fuel loads and restores native habitat in the Santa Cruz Mountains, operates a native plant greenhouse at Cascade Ranch, and maintains native plant gardens at San Juan Bautista State Park, Castle Rock State Park, and at Pie Ranch on the Santa Cruz Coast.

Dr. Griffin will start her full-time assignment as AMLT’s new Executive Director on November 15 2021.