

Proposed Gregory Canyon Landfill Cultural Fact Sheet

1. The proposed Gregory Canyon landfill is located on the western slope of Gregory Mountain, a spiritual and religious site of tremendous significance to the Luiseno people.
2. Gregory Mountain is known as Chokla among the Luiseno. It is one of the resting places of Takwic, an important spiritual figure. For this reason, the mountain is also known as Takwic Puki, or Takwic's House.
3. Luiseno people have long made pilgrimages to Chokla for spiritual guidance, religious ceremonies, and healing. Putting a landfill on the sacred mountain's flank is akin to building a trash dump against the wall of a cathedral.
4. Medicine Rock, another important sacred site, is located at the base of Chokla just outside the boundary of the proposed landfill. This site is well documented as a religious and ritual center. The landfill would irrevocably damage the sacred nature of this site.
5. The water of the San Luis Rey river is also considered sacred to the Luiseno people. The name Pala means water in the Luiseno language. The Gregory Canyon landfill represents an enormous threat of desecration to this vital source of life-giving power.
6. Sacred sites are intensely personal and private to the native people who use them. There is little physical evidence of religious and ritual use of Chokla. Yet, spiritual significance is not to be found in archaeological evidence, but in the hearts and minds of the living people who venerate this place, and the ancestors in whose steps they follow.
7. The location and nature of sacred sites are usually closely guarded secrets within native communities. Yet, out of fear that Chokla would be desecrated, the Luiseno people have chosen to speak out to save their sacred mountain, as well as Medicine Rock. The sites are both listed in the Sacred Lands File with the Native American Heritage Commission.
8. According to Luiseno cosmology, the people have always lived on this land. Their sites have always been sacred. Archaeologists have documented that native people have lived in the shadow of Chokla for at least 10,000 years. The fight to save Chokla from the landfill is a fight for cultural survival.