

National Park Service, Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation create Xaa-tr'vlh-nvt-tr'e'-yu', or “Women in Fire” initiative

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The National Park Service (NPS) and the Tribal Council of the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation have signed a historic Annual Funding Agreement (AFA) that paves the way for projects, like an initiative called Xaa-tr'vlh-nvt-tr'e'-yu', or “Women in Fire.” The agreement will provide more efficient collaboration and partnership on projects aimed to protect the natural and cultural resources in Redwood National and State Parks.

This initiative is part of a national NPS strategy to recruit, train, and support women in wildland fire careers. This agreement will directly encourage local Indigenous women to pursue careers in the wildland fire management profession. A goal of the program is to create pathways to success and leadership for women within the park’s wildland fire program.

The agreement, authorized under Title IV of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act and the Tribal Self Governance Act, is the first of its kind between the Nation and the National Park Service.

To accomplish this, Redwoods National and State Parks will work on changing the culture and structure of the wildland fire program. They'll do this by training, recruiting, and retention of more women in this career path. These women will be involved in all aspects of managing wildland fires and will bring their diverse values to firefighting across the country.

“The Tolowa Dee-ni’ Nation has a proven track record of using traditional ecological knowledge to successfully complete projects within the parks for the benefit of our visitors,” said Redwood National Park Superintendent Steve Mietz. “This agreement builds upon our existing relationship, allowing us to work together more efficiently. The Xaa-tr'vlh-nvt-tr'e'-yu', or Women in Fire initiative, is an incredible first use of this new AFA.”

The agreement provides an efficient funding mechanism to help support the shared goal of the Nation and parks to work toward co-governance and co-stewardship of the lands.

"We are thrilled to announce the signing of the historic agreement for the protection of resources, " said Tolowa Dee-ni’ Chairperson Jeri Lynn Thompson. “This agreement has been a long time coming and will be used as a tool to build on the strong partnership we already have with Redwood National and State Parks.”

In recent years, the National Park Service and California Department of Parks and Recreation have placed a greater emphasis on working with Indigenous Tribes. Redwood National and State Parks is committed to continuing to find more ways to amplify indigenous voices and roles within the park lands.

Victor Bjelajac, District Superintendent, California State Parks North Coast Redwoods District, added, “We have been making important strides forward in removing governmental barriers that have prevented Tribes from working and living in their historic homelands. This is another important step in restoring a balance that was lost.”