

Public Visioning Survey and Workshops on Alameda-Tesla Property (Tesla Park) Classification

After decades of work, in 2021 a broad coalition finally persuaded the legislature and governor to end plans to expand Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) and turn the sensitive Alameda-Tesla state park property into a motorcycle, all-terrain vehicle and 4x4 park. Now the real work to define what this new unit of the state parks system will be is beginning.

What “Classification” Does the Tesla Deserve?

California State Parks has begun a years-long effort to ultimately open the Alameda-Tesla property for public access. That property, commonly referred to as Tesla Park, is located in the southeast corner of Alameda County. It covers about 3,100 acres and has been closed to the public since the state bought it in the 1990s.

A broad coalition of organizations fought to make sure this special land would benefit the public without destroying its exceptional natural and cultural characteristics. It’s an area rich in biodiversity, including golden eagles, tule elk, and red-legged frogs and more. Among its threatened or endangered residents, is a large number of rare plants and sensitive plant communities. It sits along a critical linkage habitat corridor. It also holds important spiritual and cultural sites for the region’s indigenous people, and it contains remnants of a historic mining community of Tesla that disbanded more than 100 years ago.

In 2021, the legislature passed a bill that, among other things, prohibited the use of off-highway vehicles on the Tesla park land and provided that State Parks would undertake a planning process to establish Tesla as a separate unit of the State Parks system.

Now State Parks has begun what is expected to be a years-long planning process. The first major step is to “**classify**” the land as a unit of the state parks system which is a decision that the Parks and Recreation Commission is expected to take up in mid-2024. The second major step is to then prepare the more detailed use and management plans through a general plan and EIR process. When these steps are completed the Tesla site can be opened to the public.

A State Reserve Classification Protects Tesla and Allows Public Access

The coalition for Tesla Park wants the land classified as a State Reserve under PRC 5019.65. State Reserves help fully preserve particularly rare and sensitive plants, animals, scenic qualities, geological features and cultural resources of statewide significance. Tesla has all of these qualities.

People are still allowed and encouraged to visit reserves and there is public access for day use within reserves with the focus on preservation, enjoyment and education.

A **Tesla Reserve can** include hiking, wildlife viewing, birdwatching, nature appreciation, self-guided interpretive trails, guided tours, trail signs and educational exhibits and picnicking. Reserves **can** support education and research for k-12 schools, college students and scientists. A Tesla Reserve **can** also serve the Native American community for traditional and ceremonial purposes.

Understandably, given the extensive sensitive resources, development of facilities, resource manipulation and more active and intrusive recreation activities are not generally allowed in a reserve. Given the terrain, landscape and intact ecosystem in Tesla, mountain biking and e-bikes, driving, multi-use trails, drones, rock collection, geocaching, hunting, fishing, and camping (which State Parks has presented as options) would disrupt and degrade the sensitive resources that cover the entire Tesla site.

Importantly, however, State Parks has other adjacent property that is already impacted, including Carnegie SVRA, where these more impactful active recreation activities can be located, thereby protecting Tesla as a Reserve. Carnegie SVRA has camping already and mountain and e-biking could be located there. State Parks also owns over 300+ acres along Tesla Road adjacent to the Reserve area where these more intensive activities could also be located while fully protecting the Tesla Reserve.

You can learn more about the coalition’s vision for the Tesla Reserve at www.teslapark.org .

Help Create a Tesla Reserve

1. Send an Email to State Parks asking for Tesla to be Classified as a State Reserve

Send an email to state parks to advocate for Tesla to be classified as a State Reserve. Below is some draft text and additional information to get you started. You can personalize your email by telling State Parks why Tesla is important to you and talking about your personal experiences.

Send your email to: info@alamedateslaplan.com

Subject: Classify Tesla as a State Reserve

Dear California State Parks,

I write to express support for classifying the Alameda-Tesla property as a State Reserve. This designation would protect Tesla's natural and cultural values while allowing for the public to enjoy the park through low-impact recreation, education, and scientific research.

Tesla Park is a vital habitat for golden eagles, elk, red-legged frogs and numerous rare plants, and contains important spiritual and cultural sites for indigenous communities.

I support the Save Tesla Park coalition's vision to name the Reserve "Hismet Warep," meaning "Sacred Earth" in the Chochenyo language of the East Bay Ohlone People. I believe planning and management of this land should be conducted in cooperation with Native American tribes and their representatives, and in a way that respects the relationship and experience of Native Peoples with the land, and preserves its special characteristics.

To minimize the impact to sensitive resources in the Reserve, I recommend locating major facilities, such as interpretive centers, parking, and restrooms on State Parks-owned parcels along Tesla Road.

Thank you for your work to protect California's public lands and ensure Tesla's classification and management reflects the extensive biodiversity and cultural importance it holds.

Additional Key Points:

1. Classify all of the 3,100 acre Alameda Tesla site as a State Reserve under Public Resources Code Section 5019.65 which will provide a higher level of protection for Tesla's sensitive plants, animals, scenic qualities, geological features and cultural resources that have statewide significance.
2. Name the Reserve "Hismet Warep, meaning "Sacred Earth" in the Chochenyo language of the East Bay Ohlone people (or Hismet Warep, Horsetka" meaning "Sacred Earth in Harmony").
3. Organize the Reserve and the public experience around the relationship and experience of Indigenous People with the land, and the cultural heritage and exceptional natural resources to fully preserve Tesla's unique natural and cultural resources and provide for public enjoyment, education and research around all of Tesla's cultural and natural resources.
 - a. Cooperate with joint planning and ongoing co-management for the Reserve with Native American tribes/representatives, including establishing a standing council with Native American representatives to oversee planning and co-management.

4. Establish the Tesla Historic District that would include land within the Reserve and other State Parks owned parcels along Tesla Road, as identified by the State Parks Office of Historic Preservation in 2012, and to include placement of an historic marker to document Tesla's long cultural history.
5. Provide public access for day use with the focus on preservation, enjoyment and education that can include hiking trails, wildlife viewing, birdwatching, nature appreciation, self-guided interpretive trails, guided tours, trail signs and educational exhibits and picnicking. Support education and research for k-12 schools, college students and scientists. Serve the Native American community for traditional and ceremonial purposes.
6. In addition to low intensity activities listed above, provide electric shuttle bus service to provide access to the Tesla wildlands in order to protect the land, and environment and reduce GHG emissions.
7. Place major facilities for the Reserve such as interpretive centers, parking, picnic and restroom facilities on 300+ acres of State Parks owned rural residential parcels along Tesla Road, not within the 3,100 reserve so as to eliminate impacts to the Reserve.
8. Do not allow mountain/e-biking, multi-use trails, camping, drones, geocaching, hunting/fishing and rock collection, within the 3,100 acre Reserve, but some of these uses could be located in on other State Parks property that is adjacent to the Reserve, including neighboring Carnegie SVRA or within the 300+ acres of State Parks owned parcels along Tesla Road.
 - a. Locate and direct impactful recreation such as mountain and e- bikes, to neighboring Carnegie SVRA or within the 300+ acres of State Parks owned parcels along Tesla Road, not within the 3,100 reserve so as to eliminate impacts to the Reserve.
 - b. Locate and direct camping to neighboring CSVRA or within the State Parks owned parcels along Tesla Road, not within the 3,100 reserve so as to eliminate impacts to the Reserve.
 - c. Repurpose existing State Parks owned houses/buildings, or build new structures, on the 300+ acres of State Parks owned parcels along Tesla Road as a Visitor Interpretive Center/Museum for the Reserve and Native American Cultural Center.

2. Answer the Visioning Survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3T6JHN9>

To begin the classification process, State Parks is asking members of the public to complete an online survey about how the Alameda-Tesla property, or Tesla Park, should be managed.

The survey is divided into three parts and contains a total of 11 questions. It doesn't take long to complete. However, it is designed in a confusing way. Following is guidance on responses for 3 of the questions that are most likely to support classification of Tesla as a Reserve:

Section 1: Q. 3 –

Select:

- Hiking, walking, running,

Do not select:

- Mountain biking, gravel biking/e-biking

Section 1: Q. 4 –

Select among:

- Picnicking
- Social or cultural gatherings
- Stargazing
- Birdwatching or other nature observation
- Photography, plein air painting or other artistic activities
- Volunteering (such as environmental stewardship)

Do not select:

- Geocaching
- Drone operation
- Hunting/fishing
- Rock Hounding/mineral collection

(It is concerning that State Parks would even propose some of these destructive activities, such as hunting and mineral collection in such a rich cultural and sensitive natural resource site.)

Section 2: Visioning

Agree strongly with:

- Preserve ecological and geological processes for future generations
- Protect plants and animals that live on and pass through the property
- Respect and support California Native Americans that have used the site for generations
- Preserve the history that shaped the Alameda-Tesla property
- Provide experiences for scientists and students to complete academic studies
- Make accessible for people of all ages and abilities

Disagree strongly with:

- Have multi-use trails for walking, biking equestrian use and other uses
- Provide multiple types of recreational activities for users of all ages and abilities.

- Offer opportunities to enjoy the site overnight

3. Attend a Visioning Workshop

Both workshops were held in November and have already taken place. Thank you to everyone who participated in one of the workshops!

For More Information

You can learn more about the coalition's vision for the Tesla Reserve at www.teslapark.org .

You can learn more about the State Parks classification and planning process for the Alameda-Tesla property at www.alamedateslaplan.com . You can take the survey and sign up for workshops by going to the "Participate" page.

Thank you for helping to classify the Alameda-Tesla property as a Reserve so that we can ensure that its special characteristics are enjoyed today while protected for future generations.

Please let us know if you have any questions at friendsofteslapark@gmail.com .