



**WISHTOYO**  
CHUMASH FOUNDATION



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Wishtoyo Responds to Call to Action to Halt Construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline Threatening Critical Water Resources, Native Sovereignty, and Protection of Sacred Sites.**

*Wishtoyo Foundation, its Ventura Coastkeeper Program, Chumash Community, and Intertribal Allies Send Contingency of Representatives to Support Standing Rock Sioux Nation.*

**VENTURA, CA** – On August 15<sup>th</sup>, the Standing Rock Sioux Nation issued a call to action to all Indigenous Peoples to stand with them in their fight to stop the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) in Cannon Ball, ND. The proposed \$3.8 billion DAPL will run underground beneath the Missouri River, the sole source of water for the adjacent Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. The DAPL is estimated to transport 570,000 barrels of crude oil per day under the river, across four states, and through central prairies and traditional lands.

Construction of the DAPL threatens at minimum 27 identified sites of significant cultural and historical value. On Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>, U.S. District Judge James Boasberg issued a temporary restraining order at the request of the tribe that halts construction on land owned by the Army Corps of Engineers. However, the ruling allows continued construction of the DAPL on private land easements, sanctioning the bulldozing that took place this past weekend at an identified ancient burial and prayer ground. The protesters, known as Water Protectors, held a peaceful demonstration at the site but were met with pepper spray and the egregious mishandling of attack dogs by Energy Transfer Partner's private security.

Although Energy Transfer Partners claims that oil leaks are unlikely, oil pipelines are inherently risky and have extensive histories of spills across the country. The construction the DAPL under the Missouri River threatens the Reservation's access to clean drinking water. These communities – and all people – depend upon accessible and unimpaired natural resources to support their livelihoods, health, and cultural identity. Just this month, the North Dakota Department of Health released an announcement that an oil spill from a separate pipeline, reported in July, had in fact spilled thousands of gallons more than the two barrels of oil that were initially reported. It is still unknown if this misreported leak has affected the groundwater.

“Unfortunately, here in our Chumash homelands in coastal California, we are all too familiar with the impacts of oil spills and pipeline breaches,” said Alicia Cordero, Chumash descendent and Wishtoyo Foundation's First Nations Program Officer.

“We have been given promises of safety from oil companies and government agencies and we have experienced, first-hand, the destruction that follows,” said Mati Waiya, Chumash Ceremonial Elder of

the Santa Clara River Turtle Clan and Executive Director of the Wishtoyo Foundation, “The lack of tribal consultation by the US Army Corps of Engineers regarding the DAPL is deeply unacceptable, dangerous, a violation of the National Historic Preservation Act and treaty rights, and undermines sovereignty and self-determination which are the birthrights of all First Nations People,”

Wishtoyo Foundation and its Ventura Coastkeeper program have organized a Chumash coalition to answer Tribal Council Chairman Dave Archambault II’s call to action. As the state government of North Dakota has restricted access to water and other crucial resources, Native Nations have stepped in to deliver much needed supplies to provide for the Sacred Stone prayer camp as its numbers have swelled to 5,000+ tribal peoples and allies. Our delegation joins Water Protectors from over 188 tribes gathered at the Sacred Stone and other camps in a historic demonstration of intertribal solidarity.

The unification of Nations and allies over the DAPL is indicative of an overwhelming and growing sentiment against the unethical and unsustainable practices of oil companies. Through our participation, Wishtoyo aims to bring wider attention to the cultural and environmental issues that result from dependency on fossil fuels and other such assaults on the Earth that affect communities, waters, and lands now and far into the future.

Our Chumash coalition, sponsored by the Metabolic Studio and Wishtoyo Foundation, began their journey to North Dakota on Wednesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, including members of the Santa Clara River Turtle Clan, Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation, Chumash Maritime Association, Barbareño Chumash Council, Zuni Reservation, and Anahuacalmecac (an Indigenous People’s World School in East Los Angeles). More information about Wishtoyo’s Southern California Chumash delegation can be found on our website ([www.wishtoyo.org](http://www.wishtoyo.org)).

The court’s decision on the federal injunction against the construction of the DAPL will be delivered on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

Mni wiconi. Water is life.

### **About Wishtoyo Foundation and its Ventura Coastkeeper Program**

*Founded in 1997, **Wishtoyo Foundation** (“Wishtoyo”) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization serving communities in Los Angeles, Ventura, and Santa Barbara Counties. Our mission is to address modern day environmental issues by preserving and protecting the ancient wisdom of Chumash culture and inspiring the public and its youth to take responsibility for the health of natural resources all people depend upon. In 2000, Wishtoyo founded its **Ventura Coastkeeper Program** as a member of the international Waterkeeper Alliance to protect, preserve, and restore the ecological integrity of Ventura County inland and coastal waterbodies. Wishtoyo’s unique approach integrates education, outreach, restoration, advocacy, legal action, and coalition building through our First Nations Ecological Conservation Alliance (FNECA). Through FNECA, the knowledge and protections of First Nations People is leveraged to increase our collective ability to protect cultural and natural resources.*



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