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**STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING  
VIRTUAL**

September 30, 2021

**STAFF REPORT:** Action Items: Renaming of Patrick's Point State Parks  
**STAFF:** Victor Bjelajac, North Coast Redwoods District Superintendent  
**SUBJECT:** Request for the SPRC Commission to approve the renaming of Patrick's Point State Park to Sue-meg State Park

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**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

State Parks recommends renaming Patrick's Point State Park to Sue-meg State Park. The material contained in this report is intended to provide the Commission with relevant background information to help inform a decision.

**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this action is to address the change of a place name, "Patrick's Point". The property had been claimed by a settler in 1851 and the area was named for him, which was not unusual in the early days of naming locations. State Parks acquired property in the area and choose to name the park (Patrick's Point State Park) for the familiar name already used by the public for the area. The name "Sue-meg" has been used by Yurok People to describe the area since time immemorial. Although there have been different anglicized spellings used historically, the preferred phonetic spelling as recommended by the Yurok Tribe is "Sue-meg".

State Parks' Reexamining Our Past Initiative is part of a larger project within California state government to identify and redress discriminatory names of features attached to the state parks and transportation systems. The move comes in the wake of a national conversation about the names of geographic features and builds upon Governor Gavin Newsom's work to support equity, inclusion, and accountability throughout the state to better reflect our values. Should Patrick's Point State Park receive a new name, it would be the first park to be renamed as part of this statewide effort.

## **BACKGROUND**

### Park Overview

The main body of what is now Patrick's Point State Park was acquired by the State of California in 1930 to protect a wooded region and rock formations along the coast of Humboldt County. Additional acquisitions in the 1970s added 200+ more acres to the park. The Park is located on the northern coast of California in Humboldt County, 26 miles north of Eureka and 46 miles south of Crescent City. Most of the Park's 625 acres lie on a peninsula which juts out into the Pacific Ocean. The Park is characterized by a variety of natural environments and features such as steep rocky shorelines, a wide sandy beach, sunlit meadows, rock outcroppings, tidepools, and dramatic views of the coastline. There are over 3.5 miles of ocean frontage in the park.

In addition to stunning natural features, the park includes the recreated Yurok village of Sumêg (est. 1990), developed as a collaborative effort between California State Parks and the Yurok Indigenous community to help educate the public about Northwest California indigenous culture and to help sustain the continuation of traditional practices. Patrick's Point State Park is located within the traditional lands of the Yurok People.

Much of the unit is developed for public use. There are approximately 120 individual campsites, group campsites, a campfire center with a 200-person capacity, a visitor center, and a six-mile plus network of foot trails.

### History of the Name Patrick's Point State Park

Patrick's Point State Park is named after the westernmost promontory on the peninsula in which it is situated, Patrick's Point, for the settler who claimed the area. The name had been a long-established adoption by the public and was recommended due to being an established name of the point and a recognized location.

Patrick Beegan had claimed the property and called it Patrick's Ranch. This claim was recorded in the Trinidad Record Book on January 13, 1851 (Turner and Turner 2010:166). Beegan asked for "certain public lands situated about six miles north of Trinidad Bay in Upper California" where he supposedly built a cabin (Patrick's Point General Plan 1985:25). Patrick Beegan was only on the property for a few years before moving to Hart's Prairie in the Bald Hills area (Turner and Turner 2010:166). An article in the Crescent City Herald from July 15, 1854, implicated Mr. Beegan in the murder of a Native American boy near Trinidad.

*"The boy died the day after he was shot, and Patrick was arrested and brought before Justice Parker, who proceeded to take the testimony of witnesses to the fact. Three witnesses were examined, and during the examination of the fourth, Patrick made his escape from the officers in charge and took to the woods. He has not yet been heard from ... We are informed from reliable sources that this man Patrick shot another Indian, a few weeks ago, and has committed many outrages upon the Indians in the vicinity of Trinidad within the last year."*

Beegan lost the land at Patrick's Point in a sheriff's sale after his escape. After moving to Hart's

Prairie, Beegan was involved in leading a militia to a Native American Village at a place that became known as Christmas Prairie, about 30 miles east of Eureka. The place got its name from a massacre at that location on Christmas Day in 1864. Beegan met his demise at a spring on Hart's Prairie.

### The Name Sue-meg State Park

The State Park is located within the traditional lands of the Yurok People. Modern Yurok People are represented by four federally recognized tribes, the largest of which is the Yurok Tribe with a population of over 6000 people. The Yurok Tribe is the largest tribe in California.

In the 1980s, State Parks initiated the Yurok Village project to construct a traditional redwood plank house village at the park. This effort was one of the oldest in State Parks' history, tracing back to 1928 when A.L. Kroeber from the University of California was asked for recommendations concerning where such a village should be constructed. Little progress was made until 1963, when the California State Assembly passed AB 327, which called for the Department to, "... investigate and study the feasibility of rebuilding or re-establishing a former Yurok Indian Village for historical purposes." (Parkman 2007:2).

In 1964, State Parks recommended that the village be built at Patrick's Point State Park. In 1986, State Parks initiated the project in earnest, establishing an advisory committee composed of local Yurok People. Sumêg Village was constructed from 1988-1990 and was dedicated in 1990. The village was built for two important reasons: 1) to serve as a place where Northwest California Indian culture can be interpreted to the public and 2) to be a place that local Yurok People can come to maintain their traditional ways making the village an element of that tradition (Parkman 2007:2).

The Yurok name for this promontory is described as "Sumig" in Yurok Geography by T.T. Waterman (1920). Sumig is described as, "A point called by the whites Patrick's Point. This promontory and the region back of it are celebrated in Yurok song and story." (Waterman 1920:267).

In a January 27, 2021, letter to North Coast Redwoods District Superintendent Victor Bjelajac from Chairman Joseph James of the Yurok Tribe, the Yurok Tribe specifically requested that the park be renamed "Sue-meg".

### Naming Codes and Policies

Classification and naming of units, features, groves, and trails of the State Parks System fall under the jurisdiction of the Commission and is outlined in the STATE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION STATEMENTS OF POLICY II.2 CLASSIFICATION AND NAMING UNITS, FEATURES, GROVES, AND TRAILS OF THE STATE PARK SYSTEM. This policy provides guidance on the naming of State Park units. In most cases, a unit should bear the name to which it has been accustomed due to location, association, history, natural features, or general usage. A unit may be named by the Commission in honor of a person living or deceased, or a group, organization, or other entity which has rendered services of statewide significance to the State Park System.

## **PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS**

Patrick's Point State Park has been a unit of the State Park System since 1930. The unit was classified as a state park and officially named by the California State Park and Recreation Commission in September of 1963. The General Plan was approved by the State Park and Recreation Commission in 1983.

## **PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS**

Public outreach has been conducted by the North Coast Redwoods District (District) including consultation with California Native American Tribes. The District has met in person with the Tribal Councils of the Yurok Tribe, the Resighini Rancheria, the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, and the Cher-ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria between January and September 2021. The following California Native American Tribes have been consulted via written correspondence: Elk Valley Rancheria, Big Lagoon Rancheria, Blue Lake Rancheria, Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria, and the Wiyot Tribe.

Additionally, the District has reached out to the following partners, organizations, and stakeholders to seek input: Redwood National Park, Intertribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council, Clarke Museum, Humboldt County Historical Society, Native Women's Collective, California Indian Basketweavers Association, Humboldt State University Department of Anthropology, Humboldt State University Native American Studies Department, Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, and Parks California.

## **PROPOSED ACTION**

Although State Parks does not make a practice of changing the name of a classified park unit, Park staff strongly believe that the current name of Patrick's Point is not an appropriate name due to Mr. Beegan's historic mistreatment of the indigenous people and the lack of statewide significance or contribution associated with the name.

Understanding that the State Park and Recreation Commission has the jurisdiction over the naming of units of the State Parks system and that names are guided by policy to reflect significant contribution to the State of California, California State Parks is recommending renaming of Patrick's Point State Park to Sue-meg State Park to honor the Yurok Indigenous community's sacred relationship with this area.

## **LEGAL ISSUES**

There are no known legal issues relating to the State Park and Recreation Commission's approval of the renaming of the State Park.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is minor fiscal impact to renaming the park as signage, interpretive and information materials and planning documents will have to be updated to reflect the new name. Many of the signs can be updated during regular scheduled maintenance using the district's budget operation funds. No additional funds are needed.

## **CITATIONS**

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