



Mata 'Yuum: A Gathering Space

In 2017 the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians applied for assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to reclaim a long abandoned avocado grove to use as a site to restore and manage culturally important native plants. Through NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) they created Mata 'Yuum, which means a gathering space in the Kumeyaay language.

The tribe purchased six acres of defunct avocado grove on Paradise Mountain that borders their tribal trust lands and looked to the NRCS Tribal Liaison and Escondido Service Center to work with them on a conservation plan. The plan focused on removal of non-native species, including dead avocado trees and many invasives, and replanting a variety of traditionally used native plants. EQIP Tribal Initiative funding assisted with the site preparation and planting as well

as a solar pumping plant, reservoir, and micro irrigation for plant establishment.

The tribe enlisted the help of Indigenous Regeneration, a 501(c)(3) organization founded by Lacey Boyer Cannon and her husband Paul Cannon of the Kumeyaay Ipai-Waipuk clan, who worked closely with the San Pasqual Environmental Department, local traditional gatherers, and tribal youth; so that the restoration project was truly a community effort. They planted over 50 different species and a total of more than 1,000 plants. The site has already hosted community gatherings and will continue to be a space for gathering traditional use plant materials and to teach tribal youth about how these plants have been used for generations by California's first people.

In more ways than one, the project's name holds true: Mata 'Yuum, a gathering space.



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Lacey Boyer Cannon and NRCS Tribal Liaison Pedro Torres tour the site to discuss resource concerns and opportunities for restoration. The landscape was dominated by invasive forbs and grasses.



A view of Mata 'Yuum after clearing and replanting. The landscape now hosts a plethora of native plants that have many traditional uses for food, fiber, and medicine.



Lacey Boyer Cannon and Pedro Torres check new growth on an established Western Cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), or Ha' in Kumeyaay. This plant not only has medicinal properties, its dead limbs are an ideal substrate for oyster mushrooms, an important protein source for tribes of this region.



Lacey Boyer Cannon and Pedro Torres look at the established deer grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*) Kwaayull in Kumeyaay, used as a traditional basket material.



Front-page photo: Paul Cannon and Pedro Torres examining a recently planted Brittle Bush (*Encelia farinosa*), or Nahekwi in Kumeyaay. Various parts of this plant can be used for pain relief.

Want to learn more about conservation assistance available to tribes?

www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov

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