

Range of Light National Monument Tribal Rights



1. Tribal History in the Range of Light

The Range of Light National Monument has been home to Native American people for at least 13,500 years and their presence continues to today. Archaeological evidence from the “Paleoindian Period” (14,000- 10,000 years ago) suggests that these early inhabitants were nomadic, living, in large part, by hunting now-extinct megafauna, engaged in trade networks for raw materials, and were skilled in manufacturing stone tools. In the “Archaic Period” (10,000-1,500 years ago), inhabitants continued many of these activities and increased their consumption of plants including acorns and pine nuts; developed improved hunting weapons including the atlatl and bow and arrow, built larger, more permanent settlements, grew increasingly complex social organizations, and created basketry with a high level of sophistication.

2. Current Presence

Because of the complexity of federal processes for tribal recognition and the history of tribal relationships with the federal government, some tribes are federally recognized, some tribes are recognized by the state of California and not by the federal government, or not recognized by either but nevertheless have a continuous presence in the region and passion for caring for the land and have taken on that important responsibility. This is the case with the North Fork Mono tribe, which is based near the proposed monument, and is leading efforts to unite tribes and to restore the health of the region, and the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation near Yosemite. In a separate document, we will explore all the tribes in the region both recognized and unrecognized tribes.

3. What does the bill say about tribal rights?

The proposed bill supports tribal access, existing rights, and tribal involvement in land management. Here is the proposed language:

(m) Native American Cultural And Religious Uses. Tribes shall retain all existing rights, such that nothing in this Act diminishes—

(1) the rights of any Indian tribe; or

(2) any tribal rights regarding access to Federal land for tribal activities, including spiritual, cultural, and traditional food-gathering activities, and cultural controlled burns.

(n) Native American Cultural Burns. Tribes shall retain existing rights to perform cultural burns within the monument area and to plan the burns and their management with support from the management agency.

Tribal agreements, which already exists via a contract with the Forest Service, are honored and remain, and cultural burns, which support wildlife, native plant life, and Native American culture, will be part of this incredible landscapes’ future restoration.