

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

RESOLUTION – ACKNOWLEDGING THE CONTRIBUTION OF
THOMAS GATES

WHEREAS, Thomas Gates, known as Tom, started his career during his undergraduate years at Humboldt State University where he met his lifetime partner, Jenni. Together, they worked and raised their children in the mountains of eastern California, in the Sierras and White Mountains, as well as on the North Coast, in Humboldt County. Tom earned dual BA degrees from Humboldt in 1987, in Anthropology and Philosophy, with a Minor in Art. He earned his PhD in Cultural Anthropology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in 1993; and

WHEREAS, his lifelong commitment to tribes began while completing his graduate fieldwork with the Yurok, Tom continued to work for the Yurok Transition Team, assisting in developing the framework for the establishment of the Yurok Tribe. He continued to work for the tribe, in a number of capacities, centered on culture and heritage preservation, until 2008; and

WHEREAS, during his time with the Yurok Tribe, Tom successfully advanced several of the objectives outlined in Preamble of the Yurok Constitution. Tom made invaluable contributions to the tribal government's most impactful projects, including land recover, Klamath dam removal and California condor reintroduction. Tom played a pivotal role in the development of the Yurok Tribal Heritage Preservation Office. Tom was tireless in his effort to preserve important Yurok religious sites throughout the Tribe's ancestral territory; and

WHEREAS, Tom, by his scope of consulting duties, had developed and conveyed justifiable veracity and principled positions towards crucial environmental and indigenous issues. By utilizing knowledge and acumen in his numerous meetings, reviews, and written opinion for Native Tribes, alongside other conglomerates, he would uphold the integrity, ethics and unification essential to the benefit of all; and

WHEREAS, Tom was among the first duly appointed Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) in California as well as in the Country, and in this capacity and with clear vision and political will, forever expanding the role of THPOs, he pushed the scope of consultations beyond NHPA Section 106 undertakings on Tribal Lands to include all projects with the potential to impact tribally significant cultural resources on Ancestral Lands that are regulated by various local, state and federal laws and jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, Tom joined the California Energy Commission (CEC) in December of 2012, he was a constant mentor and educator for the CEC's Assistant Tribal Liaisons on how to conduct meaningful tribal engagement and engrained a culture within the CEC to understand, respect, and honor tribal sovereignty while highlighting the importance of protecting cultural resources. He developed a robust network and established communication strategies that proved effective, growing tribal engagement in all CEC's programs. He gifted paintings, including annual holiday cards, reflecting his gratitude, generosity, and deep connection to others and landscapes. He led CEC efforts to develop meaningful conferences to build relationships between state agencies and tribes working toward a resilient clean energy future; and

WHEREAS, Tom brought an infectious enthusiasm for tribal affairs and historic preservation to the Cultural Resources Unit of the CEC's Siting, Transmission, and Environmental Protection Division, leading documentation of Native American and Euroamerican cultural landscapes, supporting innovations like the Cultural Resources Unit Inventory System, and promoting a people-focused approach to the management of our cultural environments; and

WHEREAS, Tom, a man of many talents, quickly earned the utmost respect and admiration of multiple Tribal communities and colleagues as an ally and lifelong friend. Tom integrated Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Tribal wisdom into CEC undertakings and introduced Tribal Leaders and Traditional Religious Practitioners to become Intervenors in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act; and

WHEREAS, Tom was not afraid to do a site visit, camp out in the field, or draw and paint to better understand the cultural landscapes of California, to share those understandings with others, and to create an elegant Traditional Cultural Property report for Obsidian Butte in Imperial County; and

WHEREAS, Tom has made lasting contributions to the recordation of Native American history. His work has enhanced the knowledge of the antiquity of the record of Native Americans across the vast California landscape and brought forth information of the lasting impacts of the Tribes on California history. Tom has worked tirelessly, with the Fort Yuma Quechan Tribe Cultural Committee, as the CEC Tribal Liaison for the protection of the Tribe's history across their traditional lands. He has laid a strong foundation regarding communication and coordination with the Tribe that will aid his successor immensely. The Fort Yuma Quechan Tribe and Cultural Committee greatly appreciate Tom's commitment and dedication to the preservation of the Tribe's cultural heritage. His work will continue to benefit Tribes well into the future; and

WHEREAS, Tom is a mentor and friend to many tribal liaisons and has strengthened the policies and practices of how the state consults and partners with California Native American tribes through his leadership and expertise.

WHEREAS, Tom will forever be appreciated by the Office of the Public Advisor (PAO+) for incorporating them into the most recent tribal conference and tribal visits then masterminding the expansion of the office to cover tribal affairs. He will hold a special place in their hearts due to his friendship and all he invested in each of them through his mentorship and wisdom, especially through the art he created and

graciously shared. PAO+ will miss him brightening up meetings with his quirky jokes, reliable recipes, fascinating stories, wise advice, and humble nature. PAO+ also appreciates his receptivity to learning a thing or two from them, especially about Microsoft Office technology, which he dreaded, but we all hope transformed his life and will continue using into retirement to help manage his vineyard; and

WHEREAS, Tom illuminated the trail for so many of us, advancing the state's journey and commitment to rebuilding our relationships with tribes. He was generous with his time, mentoring all those he encountered with open hearts and minds that were eager to learn from his profound words, deep knowledge, and extensive experience. While sometimes he walked in circles, his footprints have left impressions at the CEC that will forever guide us in the right direction; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the CEC hereby recognizes and commends Thomas Gates for his great contributions to the CEC, California Native American Tribes, and the people of the state of California and wishes him all the best in his future endeavors.