

## **Scientist Consensus Statement – September 1, 2025**

### **Ecological Value of Statewide Significance of State Parks' Alameda-Tesla Area ("Tesla")**

#### **Policy Imperative to Permanently Preserve Tesla in its Natural State and Support for Establishment of Tesla as a Reserve**

We, the undersigned scientists and academics with expertise in ecology, botany, biology, and related disciplines, endorse the overwhelming evidence that the 3,100-acre State Parks-owned Alameda-Tesla Area in eastern Alameda County, also referred to as "Tesla", has rare ecological value and contains an abundance of highly sensitive natural resources of statewide significance. Because of the exceptional biodiversity at Tesla, and its wealth of natural resources, the area holds irreplaceable value for our state.

For three-quarters of a century, renowned university scientists, such as the late herpetologist Robert Stebbins, have recognized the biological importance of the Tesla area, and written numerous letters to State Parks supporting its full preservation. We call on you again to ensure resource conservation at Tesla by classifying it as a State Parks Reserve, the highest level of protection available under the applicable sections of the Public Resources Code (PRC). The General Plan for Tesla should be consistent with the resource protection afforded by Reserve classification.

The extensive scientific evidence of Tesla's extraordinary biological resources cannot be ignored. Forty-five (45) species of rare plants, and 56 local watch list plants have been documented on Tesla. It is a Botanical Priority Protection Area documented by the East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society. Professor Brent Mishler and his colleagues (signers to this statement) conducted independent research of phylogenetic endemism of native plants statewide, and identified the Tesla area as a top conservation priority area for the entire state. Fifty-five (55) special-status animals have been documented on Tesla (3 nearby). The California State Wildlife Action Plan designates thirty-three (33) of these special-status animals as Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Tesla covers an absolutely essential Critical Linkage Habitat Corridor through the Northern Diablo Range that is vital for long-term persistence of wildlife and plant populations. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife assessment confirms the extraordinary biodiversity of this area where arid and mesic biotic regions converge. The location, topography, and mix of species supports the role of Tesla in providing refugia during a time of extreme climate change. These facts, and more, are documented in the comprehensive Biological Assessment of Tesla<sup>1</sup> which several of us peer reviewed. The evidence is indisputable.

We have and continue to conduct research on wildlands throughout California, and speak with experience and authority when we state that Tesla's documented assemblages of species, and mix of habitat types are unique. Tesla is not just like any other land or public space. It is truly exceptional, a rare jewel. It should be treated by California State Parks with the greatest care possible to ensure that opening the area to public access does not cause detrimental impacts to the sensitive soils, streams, ponds, vegetation, and wildlife. Under the applicable statutory scheme, and given the 2021 legislation, the highest level of protection available is classification as a Reserve. This will provide low-intensity access for enjoyment and education.

We strongly recommend that the State Park and Recreation Commission classify Tesla as a Reserve under PRC Section 5019.65(a), and prepare the General Plan in concordance with the resource protections designated by Reserve classification. As Professor Emeritus and Jepson Herbarium Curator Emeritus, Bruce Baldwin, also a signer to this consensus statement, has expressed "Tesla is too important to be sacrificed."

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<sup>1</sup> Full Biological Assessment of Tesla – "Reserve Classification of California State Parks Alameda-Tesla Property, Alameda County, California based on an Assessment of Biological Resources and the Effects of Recreational Activities on those Resources", dated September 1, 2025, which updates the 8/1/2024 issue, including information from the most current official lists of special-status and watch list species.

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Sincerely, (list of signers follows in alphabetical order)

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