

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS
OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Tishawnik

THIS NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION CONTAINS RESTRICTED INFORMATION

Archaeological and traditional property locations are considered confidential and public access to such information is restricted by law (Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act; Section 9(a) of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act; Executive Order 13007; Section 6254.10 of the California State Government Code). The following summary of the description and significance of the above-named resource is available for public access.

Tishawnik dancegrounds have been used since time immemorial by the now federally recognized Karuk Tribe. The fifty-acre undeveloped river-front parcel contains a series of five flats where the Karuk and visiting tribes performed (and still perform) the World Renewal Ceremony, White Deerskin Dance, Alternate Year Medicine Dance, and War Dance, and land on its beach as part of the Boat Dance. Besides the flats on which dances occur, Tishawnik contains large sacred rocks, priest trails, rock altars, sacred trees, rock seats for dancers, and sacred fire rings where medicine is made. Of most importance to the Karuk, Tishawnik contains the exact locations where the dances must be performed, determined by views to sacred mountains and by the way shadows from the mountains fall on Tishawnik. The dance locations are precise and cannot be changed, because according to the Karuk it was at this location that the Immortal, Coyote, introduced the War Dance.

Tishawnik is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level of significance for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of northern California Native American history. At Tishawnik, as regular events, the Karuk and visiting tribes, such as the Hupa and Yurok, performed and still perform the World Renewal cycle of dances, making the dancegrounds locally and historically significant to the ethnic heritage of Native Americans of the region. The flats on which dances occur, and sacred rocks, rock altars and mountains that determine the location of the dances, have for centuries been associated with local tribes. In addition, an important event in the Karuk and regional Native American worldview occurred at Tishawnik. It is here that the Immortal, Coyote, stole fire from the Immortals and introduced the War Dance. The War Dance is a linear dance unlike the circular dances around a trophy most common to the rest of California and the continent. The White Deerskin Dance and other dances at Tishawnik also are all linear dances. The White Deerskin Dance at Tishawnik is one of the most important events in Karuk community affairs, and the dancegrounds are the venue for the region's most important gatherings and social events, a cultural focal point for Karuk community, social, political, and recreational life. The carefully tended and maintained dancegrounds are the tangible remains of the important Native American ceremonies that once took place here, and they continue to serve the Native American community today. As such, this place also represents the Karuk struggle to maintain their culture.