

Future management of Humbug Valley in question

By Jane Braxton Little, Sacramento Bee

CHESTER – An Indian tribe and a state agency are vying to become long-term stewards of a 2,300-acre area in the Humbug Valley, just east of the Pacific Crest Trail where Plumas and Tehama counties meet.

The Maidu Summit Consortium, a group of Maidu Indian tribal, nonprofit and grassroots organizations, and the California Department of Fish and Game have applied to become owners of the area.

Here's what they are fighting over:

Southwest of Lake Almanor, carbonated springs gurgle into a wet meadow where endangered willow flycatchers nest along a trophy trout stream meandering through Humbug Valley. Flanked by a pine and fir forest that rises to 7,000-foot peaks, the heart-shaped valley hosts a hotbed of biodiversity in an extraordinary mix of Sierra Nevada and Cascade Range species.

Owned for a century by Pacific Gas and Electric Co., Humbug Valley is one of nearly 1,000 separate parcels of utility company lands designated for permanent protection under a 2004 accord reached by the state Public Utilities Commission following PG&E's bankruptcy reorganization.

A total of 140,000 acres of some of California's best wildlife habitat and fishing streams are in the process of being assigned new managers, some of them permanent owners. Under the terms of the agreement, the lands valued at \$300 million will be preserved permanently and kept available for public use. No commercial development is permitted.

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