## Land Acknowledgement for Santa Cruz County

We respectfully acknowledge that we gather on the ancestral and traditional territories of the O'odham peoples, specifically the Tohono O'odham Nation, whose historical connections to this land continue to the present day. This region, which includes the Santa Cruz River Valley, has been a crucial corridor for Indigenous peoples since time immemorial, serving as a lifeline through the Sonoran Desert.

We specifically recognize:

* **The Tohono O'odham Nation, whose traditional territories extend beyond current political borders into Mexico**
* **The ancestral presence of the Sobaipuri O'odham, who lived along the Santa Cruz River**
* **The historical significance of this region to other Indigenous peoples including the Apache**
* **The continued spiritual and cultural importance of this landscape to Native peoples**

This region holds particular significance as:

* A traditional watershed that sustained Indigenous communities
* An ancient trading corridor connecting different Indigenous nations
* A landscape rich in cultural and historical sites
* A region where traditional ecological knowledge helped people thrive in the desert environment

We acknowledge that:

* Modern political borders do not reflect traditional Indigenous territories
* The Santa Cruz River Valley remains culturally significant to Native peoples
* Indigenous knowledge of desert ecosystems continues to inform environmental stewardship
* Native communities maintain strong connections to these lands despite historical disruptions

We commit to:

* Honoring the sovereignty of tribal nations
* Supporting Indigenous-led initiatives and cultural preservation efforts
* Learning from traditional ecological knowledge
* Promoting awareness of both historical and contemporary Indigenous presence
* Understanding that land acknowledgement is only a first step toward meaningful action

**Geographic and Cultural Significance**

The region is characterized by:

* The life-giving Santa Cruz River and its watershed
* Ancient village sites and sacred places
* Traditional plant gathering areas that remain important today
* Historic trade routes that connected different Indigenous nations
* The ongoing preservation of Indigenous languages and cultural practices

**Border Context**

We specifically acknowledge that:

* Traditional O'odham territories extend across the current U.S.-Mexico border
* Indigenous peoples maintain connections to communities on both sides of the border
* Traditional movements and relationships continue despite modern political boundaries
* The border has created unique challenges for Indigenous communities

**Contemporary Recognition**

We recognize that:

* Indigenous communities continue to maintain strong connections to these lands
* Traditional practices and knowledge systems remain vital and relevant
* Tribal sovereignty is fundamental to respectful relationships
* Native peoples are active participants in shaping our region's future
* Indigenous perspectives are crucial for understanding and protecting this unique landscape

***This acknowledgement is a living document that reflects our ongoing commitment to respect, understanding, and collaboration with the Indigenous peoples of this region.***