



**GREAT REDWOOD
TRAIL AGENCY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KOSO Strategies selected as Tribal Liaison Consultant for the Great Redwood Trail Agency

Blue Lake, CA (8 July 2026) - After a competitive solicitation process, the **Great Redwood Trail Agency (GRTA)** is pleased to announce the selection of **KOSO Strategies, LLC** as the **Tribal Liaison Consultant for The Great Redwood Trail**, one of the longest rail-to-trail conversion projects in the United States.

The Great Redwood Trail Agency is transforming 231 miles of the former Northwestern Pacific Railroad into a multi-use trail spanning numerous Tribal lands and three counties – Humboldt, Mendocino and Trinity. The complete Great Redwood Trail will go from San Francisco to Humboldt Bay in Northern California, with the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) developing and managing the southern segments.

Once completed, it will be one of the longest rail trails in the United States, transforming an unused railroad corridor into a pathway for walking, hiking, cycling, cultural interpretations, and equestrians. The trail will cross a range of ecosystems, from old-growth redwood forests to the Eel River Canyon, with plans to repair environmental damage, restore natural species habitat and improve fish passage.

To respect Tribal traditional homelands, ceremonial grounds, and sacred places, **the GRTA Board of Directors agreed to convene a Tribal Advisory Committee, and seek a Tribal Liaison Consultant** who would both facilitate the Committee and interface with Tribes in the region to foster their participation in trail planning, cultural resource preservation and environmental restoration, producing cultural content, and undertaking commercial and restoration ventures as the trail progresses. KOSO won the bid in late May 2026.

KOSO Strategies, LLC, is a California-based strategic advisory firm dedicated to **advancing culturally grounded, Tribally led strategies for governance, planning, and intergovernmental collaborations, with extensive expertise in Tribal land use and public policy consultation.** Led by Founding Directors Ernest Vargas, Jr. (Shoshone) and Armida Vargas (Tewa/Chumash), KOSO was founded on the principle of assisting Tribal governments with building resilient and self-sustaining communities.

"KOSO Strategies is deeply honored to be selected as the Tribal Liaison Consultant for the Great Redwood Trail Agency," said Ernest Vargas, Founding Director. "This appointment reflects a shared commitment to ensuring that Tribal Nations are not merely consulted, but also are active partners in shaping the future of one of California's most ambitious public land and recreation initiatives. The Great Redwood Trail crosses the ancestral homelands of many Tribal communities whose histories, cultural traditions, and stewardship practices remain inseparable from this landscape."

"We're grateful for the trust placed in us and are committed to ensuring Tribal voices are heard, respected and centered in this project," added Armida Vargas. "We're honored to help build a framework of collaboration that respects Tribal sovereignty, elevates Tribal perspectives, and creates meaningful opportunities for Tribes in the planning, stewardship, and operation of the Trail."

The KOSO team has worked with Tribal governments in Mendocino, Trinity and Humboldt counties, and has extensive knowledge of California Tribal history, culture and governance. KOSO brings more than 50 years of collective experience working with Tribes nationwide delivering culturally grounded counsel that honors sovereignty while driving measurable results. Where other firms identify problems, KOSO takes an active role in solving them, working side by side with Tribal Nations to implement lasting change.

"KOSO Strategies brings the capacity and experience needed to build on the tribal relationships we have formed over the past several years during the master planning process," said GRTA Executive Director, Elaine Hogan. "We look forward to deepening those partnerships, and launching our Tribal Advisory Committee so tribal expertise can be shared with our staff, board and trail development partners as the project is implemented."

Building from the many conversations and consultation meetings that took place during the multi-year master planning process for the project, KOSO Strategies will begin contacting Tribes in the region in the coming weeks to explore opportunities for active partnership and participation in the Tribal Advisory Committee.

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About The Great Redwood Trail

The Great Redwood Trail (GRT) was created by the State of California, thanks to years of advocacy from communities along the former rail line, and through the efforts of State Senator Mike McGuire, who represents the northwestern part of the state. It will be one of the longest multi-use rail-to-trail conversion projects in the United States, extending from San Francisco Bay to beyond Humboldt Bay.

When completed, the northern portion of The GRT will be a continuous trail spanning a variety of landscapes across 231 miles in Mendocino, Trinity, and Humboldt Counties. It will pass through the cities of Ukiah, Willits, Fortuna, Rio Dell, Eureka, Arcata, and Blue Lake, and dozens of unincorporated communities. The trail will offer a variety of surface types and expected uses, from "natural surface backcountry trails" to "paved multi-use" to fine paved multi-use segments.

The segments in Sonoma and Marin Counties are being planned, constructed, and operated by Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) with Larkspur at its southern terminus. SMART and its partners have constructed 40+ miles of pathway, so far. The final connection between Larkspur and the Golden Gate Bridge may be planned, constructed, and operated by others.

About The Great Redwood Trail Agency

The Great Redwood Trail Agency (GRTA) is a public agency established by the Great Redwood Trail Agency Act, Government Code § 93000 et seq., to develop and manage the Great Redwood Trail. The GRTA officially replaced the North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA) in 2022 and manages the rail corridor in Mendocino, Trinity, and Humboldt counties. The rail corridor in Sonoma and Marin counties and the multi-use SMART Pathway, the southern segment of the Great Redwood Trail, is managed by Sonoma – Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART).

Resources:

- [The Great Redwood Trail Agency: Tribal Engagement](#)

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