



UPDATE on the FENCE AT TULE LAKE

statement of the Tule Lake Committee

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

Hallowed ground – that’s what the site of the Tule Lake concentration camp represents to the thousands of men, women and children imprisoned in Northern California during WWII, solely on the basis of race. It is a place of mourning and reflection. It is the only camp where the U.S. government segregated and punished more than 12,000 Japanese Americans who dared to protest the injustice of their wartime incarceration.

However, the proposed expansion of a small municipal airport threatens to pave over this hallowed ground. A firebreak that ran through the center of Tule Lake was converted into an airport runway to provide crop dusting services for local homesteaders. The Tule Lake cemetery was destroyed — bulldozed — the grave sites desecrated and used as fill dirt, with only a gouged-out hole in the ground remaining. The Modoc County dump, piled high with garbage and disintegrating castoffs, sits next to the cemetery site, adding to the sense of violation.

A half century ago, officials may not have recognized these actions as racially insensitive and inappropriate. Today, however, perpetuating such destructive misuse of the site is indefensible.

Three years ago, the Tule Lake Committee began a campaign to Stop the Fence in the middle of the historic Tule Lake site. We protested and temporarily halted construction of that three-mile long airport fence, which was scheduled for completion in 2015. For now, we stopped that project, which would have destroyed the fabric of the historic site and any future possibility of preserving it.

On April 21, the Tule Lake Committee and other advocates will begin a series of “collaborative discussions” with local and government stakeholders to share views about Tule Lake’s significance and how to resolve the problem of an airport located in the middle of a national and international site of shame. These discussions were initiated and funded by the Federal Aviation Administration, and are administered by Modoc County. The Udall Foundation, a government organization created to resolve conflict, will manage the process.

From these discussions, we hope stakeholders will recognize Tule Lake as a historically significant civil rights site that must be protected for future generations, and work toward a win-win solution for everyone.

The Tule Lake Committee

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