

Contra Costa supervisors reject Mount Diablo name change

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MARTINEZ — Mount Diablo will continue to carry its historic name and will become neither Mount Ronald Reagan nor Mount John Muir if Contra Costa supervisors have anything to say about it.

Citing an outpouring of opposition in letters and on the Internet, supervisors voted Tuesday to oppose Oakley resident Art Mijares' campaign to rename the iconic 3,849-foot peak after the late president.

Mijares, a devout Christian, in January asked the U.S. Board on Geographic Names for the name change because he considers it a profane influence to have a mountain named — in Spanish — for the devil.

At the same meeting, a new name change request popped up and also was slapped down: Supervisors also rejected Mount John Muir, proposed by a Concord man who saw genocidal roots in the mountain's Spanish name.

After listening to Mijares and four other speakers, supervisors voted unanimously to send a letter of opposition to the federal board citing:

- Overwhelming public support to keep the mountain's name.
- The need to stay consistent with history.
- The costs that a name change would impose on business and individuals.

"It's clear people support Mount Diablo as a name," said Supervisor John Gioia, of Richmond. "A school district, parks and communities have taken the name, and keeping it reflects our local thought."

Supervisors also declined to support Concord resident Robert Ericson's petition to change the mountain's name to Mount John Muir. He predicted that his request would end up on the ballot.

"The Mount Diablo name has genocidal roots," he said. "The mountain was sacred to the Miwok Indians, and it's like someone has scrawled on it 'Satan worshiping place.'"

Roland Gaebert, superintendent at Mount Diablo State Park, urged supervisors to reject both proposals, citing the importance of the name in U.S. history.

"It has been used as the base point to survey Northern California, and it houses a navigational beacon that Charles Lindbergh turned on for the first time," he said.

One supervisor expressed irritation with the whole subject, saying that the board has more important things to do than to debate something that so many residents oppose.

"We have our hands full with deep budget cuts and losing local services," said Supervisor Mary Piepho, of Discovery Bay. "Let's put an end to this discussion and get on to more important items."

The supervisors' recommendation will go to the Geographic Names board, which requested it.

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