

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

People of La Junta for Preservation Takes Legal Action to Protect Kónitsaqáíí, Sacred Lands, and Indigenous Religious Practices

PRESIDIO, TEXAS — August 14, 2026 — People of La Junta for Preservation (PLJP) has taken legal action challenging activities associated with border barrier construction along the Rio Grande that threaten Indigenous sacred places, ancestral remains, cultural landscapes, and the continuing religious practices of Native people whose relationship with this land predates the international border by thousands of years.

For the People of La Junta, **Kónitsaqáíí—the Rio Grande—is not simply a political boundary or natural resource. The river is living. She is a relative.**

Our ancestors have lived at La Junta de los Ríos and along this river for thousands of years. That relationship continues today through prayer, ceremony, the gathering of plants and medicines, collection of cattail pollen, offerings, funerary practices, care and reburial of ancestral remains, and the use of river water in ceremonies marking life, death, and community.

PLJP has worked for years to preserve archaeological sites, cemeteries, cultural landscapes, Indigenous histories, and lands connected to the People of La Junta. We have undertaken the difficult work of returning ancestors to the earth and protecting places where our families continue to practice traditions handed from one generation to the next.

The threatened destruction of these places is therefore not merely the loss of archaeological resources or historic property.

For us, it is the loss of a loved one.

The proposed border infrastructure threatens to permanently alter places where these practices continue. Construction, excavation, blasting, access restrictions, permanent lighting, and physical barriers have the potential to separate Indigenous people from the river, sacred sites, burial places, plants, caves, and cultural landscapes that are inseparable from our religious life.

Our religious practices cannot simply be relocated.

A ceremony tied to Kónitsaqáíí cannot be moved to another river. An ancestral burial place cannot be substituted with another piece of ground. A sacred cave cannot be recreated somewhere more convenient. The relationship between our people and these places exists precisely because generations before us prayed, lived, died, and were buried here.

PLJP did not make the decision to pursue litigation lightly. But preservation cannot mean documenting the destruction of our sacred places after it happens.

We cannot wait for someone else to come save what our ancestors entrusted to us.

We are pursuing this action because the responsibility to protect these places belongs not only to those who came before us, but also to those of us living today—and to the generations who will come after us.

We are the ancestors of tomorrow.

And today, we are standing for Kónitsaqáíí.

About People of La Junta for Preservation

People of La Junta for Preservation is an Indigenous-led organization dedicated to protecting and preserving the cultural landscapes, sacred places, archaeological resources, ancestral histories, and living traditions of the Indigenous peoples of La Junta de los Ríos and the greater Big Bend region.

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