



WILTON RANCHERIA CHAIRMAN JESUS TARANGO HONORED AT VISIT SACRAMENTO'S 2026 STATE OF TOURISM

ELK GROVE, Calif. (June 10, 2026) — On June 3, Visit Sacramento recognized Wilton Rancheria Chairman Jesus Tarango as the 2026 Tourism Champion during the organization's annual State of Tourism event, honoring his leadership and contributions to the region's economic growth through sports, entertainment and community investment.

Setting the tone for the moment, Chairman Tarango was presented with a distinctive, wrestling-style championship belt engraved with the words "Tourism Champion" above his name, as the iconic *Rocky* theme song ("Gonna Fly Now") played in the background—an energizing tribute to his impact on the region and the continued rise of Sacramento's tourism momentum.

Chairman Tarango was celebrated for his role in advancing Sacramento's profile as a premier destination—particularly through Wilton Rancheria's majority ownership of Sacramento Republic FC and its broader portfolio of enterprises, including Sky River Casino, both of which have become powerful drivers of regional pride, visitation and economic activity. His leadership has helped strengthen the connection between major entertainment, gaming and sports experiences, drawing visitors to the region and expanding Sacramento's appeal as a year-round destination.

"Chairman Jesus Tarango truly embodies the spirit of Visit Sacramento's Tourism Champion award. Together with the Wilton Rancheria, he has used his influence to not only impact his tribal community, but to take bold steps to better the entire city Sacramento region," said Visit Sacramento President & CEO Mike Testa. "True leadership isn't just about what we accomplish in our professional endeavors. It's about how we inspire others to also operate at their best. I am grateful for his commitment to Sacramento and his passion for elevating our industry."

Under Tarango's leadership, Wilton Rancheria has made strategic investments that support local jobs, attract visitors and position Sacramento as a hub for sports and entertainment. The continued growth of Sacramento Republic FC, alongside the success of Sky River Casino as a premier gaming and entertainment destination, has played a significant role in boosting regional tourism and showcasing Sacramento to new audiences.

"It's a tremendous honor to be recognized by Visit Sacramento as this year's Tourism Champion. At Wilton Rancheria, we're proud to contribute to Sacramento's growth through

investments that support tourism, entertainment, and economic development while remaining grounded in our responsibility as stewards of our ancestral homelands,” said Chairman Jesus Tarango. “That combination—innovation and tradition, growth and stewardship, destination and homeland—is what makes Sacramento truly special. I am grateful to Visit Sacramento for its leadership and for ensuring Tribes can be true partners in shaping the future of our region.”

Chris Franklin, Chief Operating Officer of Wilton Rancheria, was also recognized for his leadership and operational expertise in helping bring this vision to life. A longtime supporter of Sacramento Republic FC, Franklin has followed the club’s growth for more than a decade and played a key role in advancing Wilton Rancheria’s investment in the team. His deep understanding of the club, its loyal fan base and the broader U.S. soccer landscape has helped guide its continued momentum.

Together, Tarango and Franklin represent a collaborative approach to growth—combining leadership, innovation and community partnership to create a lasting impact across Sacramento’s tourism landscape.

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Wilton Rancheria

Wilton Rancheria is Sacramento County's only federally recognized Tribe, with more than 1,000 citizens, primarily of Miwok and Nisenan descent. Known as California's Capital Tribe, Wilton Rancheria has established itself as a leader in sustainable development, cultural preservation, and community partnership. The Tribe operates Sky River Casino, holds majority ownership of Sacramento Republic FC, and continues expanding its influence in regional economic development.

Sky River Casino

Since opening in August 2022, the casino has become a premier entertainment destination featuring 120,000 square feet of gaming, 2,500 slot machines, 81 table games, and 18 restaurants, bars, and lounge destinations, along with a 1,600-space five-story parking structure.

The casino recently broke ground on a significant hotel resort expansion that is expected to generate regional economic impact through job creation, increased tourism, and long-term investment in the local community. Planned additions include a 300-room luxury hotel, a new porte cochère with expanded valet service, a full-service day spa and salon, an outdoor pool, and approximately 30,000 square feet of flexible meeting, event, and entertainment space.

To learn more about Sky River Casino and its continued growth, please visit www.SkyRiver.com.

Visit Sacramento

Visit Sacramento is the official destination marketing and tourism organization for the City and County of Sacramento. Through strategic marketing, partnerships and major event development, Visit Sacramento works to inspire travel, drive visitation and strengthen the region's economy. Known as America's Farm-to-Fork Capital, Sacramento offers a vibrant mix of culinary experiences, cultural attractions, outdoor recreation and year-round events.

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