

Report Reveals Long-Threatened Hood River Casino a Mirage, Announces Coalition for Oregon's Future

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Detailed report concludes the Hood River site is not a practical or feasible site for the Warm Springs casino; Coalition urges elected officials to reject a Gorge casino and embrace on-reservation site in fast-growing Central Oregon

A coalition of tribal, environmental, small business and pro-family organizations released a comprehensive engineering and land use report study today that concludes the proposed location of a threatened casino in Hood River is not possible.

The report states, "a Hood River site is not a permissible, practicable or potentially legal site for the Warm Springs Tribe's proposed casino." For an executive summary or complete copy of the report, please visit www.nogorgecasino.com.

"We do not believe there is a feasible or practical scenario for locating a casino at the proposed Hood River site," said Grant Bailey, a Senior Consultant with Golder Associates who prepared the report.

"The threat of a Warm Springs casino near Hood River is an empty threat and cannot be used to justify a casino resort in Cascade Locks. This report proves that a Hood River casino is impossible from an environmental, engineering, political and legal standpoint," said Coalition member Michael Lang, with Friends of the Columbia Gorge.

The report, paid for by the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, was conducted by Golder Associates, a global environmental and engineering services firm, and Otak, Inc., a Portland planning, design, and engineering firm. The analysis focused on engineering feasibility, land use, site development costs, agency approvals and other related issues.

“A massive casino anywhere in the Columbia River Gorge is either impossible or unpopular,” said Coalition member Bill Perry of the Oregon Restaurant Association. “A far better approach is an on-reservation casino in Central Oregon.”

Coalition leaders are urging state and federal elected officials to reject a Gorge casino and immediately begin negotiations with the Warm Springs tribe to develop a new casino, on reservation lands, in Central Oregon. The Grand Ronde Tribe has offered to finance a new Warm Springs casino if it is located on Warm Springs’ Central Oregon Reservation.

“An on-reservation casino in Central Oregon protects the Gorge environment, protects Oregon from off-reservation casinos and provides all Oregon tribes with a fair casino policy instead of more delays,” said Rob Greene, an attorney with the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde.

Nick Graham, with the Oregon Family Council said, "As an organization we strongly oppose gambling, but we respect the laws that allow Native Americans the right to operate casinos. We believe that tribal casinos should be located on reservation lands and urge Oregon's elected officials to work together to keep casinos out of the Gorge."

The Coalition is also releasing a television ad Monday that will run for several weeks.

SCRIPT

Oregonians agree...

An off-reservation casino in the Columbia River Gorge is the wrong approach

But now -- there's a better way

Urge elected officials to support an on-reservation casino in Central Oregon

The benefits?

For Oregon...a fair casino policy

For our environment...protects the Gorge

And for Oregon tribes...fairness, not more delays

Tell elected officials...there's a better way

Keep casinos out of the Gorge and on reservation lands

In the past year, the proposed off-reservation casino in the Columbia River Gorge has suffered a number of key setbacks including:

The Secretary of Interior rejects the Gorge casino state/tribal Compact in April 2005

Polls in Oregon consistently show that 65% of Oregonians consistently oppose the Gorge casino and even more believe casinos should be limited to reservation lands only

Overwhelming public opposition expressed to the Gorge casino proposal during the scoping comment period (71% of all comments submitted were opposed)

Gorge casino supporter Kevin Mannix loses gubernatorial primary election to Gorge casino opponent Ron Saxton; Mannix publicly blames his defeat on support for the proposed casino

The federal government revised its initial Scoping Report to require consideration of an alternative site on Warm Springsâ€™ Central Oregon Reservation

In the face of an explosion of off-reservation casinos nation-wide, Congress is close to approving legislation to ban off-reservation casinos

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