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Oregon Daily
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Tribe seeks casino site

COOS BAY — The Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw — the only tribe in Oregon without a casino — is suing the federal government for rights to land where they plan to build their first gambling center.

The only place the Coos can legally build a casino is on its 6-acre reservation a few miles from the Coquille Indian Tribe's sprawling Mill Casino in the economically struggling community of Coos Bay — hardly an ideal location.

So the 720-member coastal tribe is suing the federal government for approval to build a casino 48 miles north, near a historic Siuslaw village just east of Florence.

"We have one rental that we get \$350 a month for," Coos Tribal Chairman Dick Clarkson said. "That's our economic development. ... Other tribes are making a million a week from their casinos, and we make \$350 a month. We aren't on the same page as everybody else."

Eight tribes in Oregon operate casinos, grossing an estimated \$250 million to \$300 million a year, according to Robert Whelan, senior economist for ECONorthwest. But earnings vary widely depending on one crucial factor: location.

In 1997, Whelan estimated that the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, with the casino closest to Portland and the Willamette Valley, generated \$82 million in gross revenue before expenses. In contrast, the Warm Springs tribe's remote Central Oregon casino grossed an estimated \$5.8 million.

Under the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, federally recognized tribes can build casinos on land held in trust for them by the federal government before 1988, when the act passed Congress.

Dennis Whittlesey, the Coos' attorney in Washington, D.C., argues that two parcels owned by the Coos just east of Florence meet two of the exceptions and should be considered reservation land qualifying for gambling.

In January 1998, the tribe bought a 100-acre parcel of land containing an old tribal village site. The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs placed it into trust for purposes other than gambling.

Then in October, Congress passed a technical amendment bringing an adjacent driveway into reservation status, amending the 1984 act that restored the tribe.

The tribe wanted to ensure access to a tribal cemetery to the north, which the tribe hopes to one day purchase, he said.

Whittlesey said the tribe then realized that because the 100-acre Hatch property was adjacent to the driveway, the larger piece was eligible for gambling under a federal law exception that says gambling is permitted on newly acquired land that is adjacent to a tribe's reservation.

Whittlesey says a tribe such as the Coos — terminated by Congress in 1954, restored to sovereign status in 1984 — is at a disadvantage because it has a tiny reservation.

And he said other Oregon tribes are gambling on land acquired after 1988, including the Grand Ronde, Coquille and Siletz.

In the lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., against Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and BIA head Kevin Gover, Whittlesey argues that the Department of the Interior has failed to respond to the tribe's request that the land be certified for gambling.

The Associated Press.

Measure 20-25 Safer Communities

What are the Facts?

Measure 20-25 is a proposed Lane County Charter Amendment designed to fund prevention, intervention, and enforcement, and address gaps in the county-wide community safety system. Each Lane County community would receive part of the money to use for its own safety programs and services.

Measure 20-25 would authorize an 8% surcharge on state personal and corporate income and excise taxes. If approved by voters, it would

- Begin January 1, 2000.
- Raise about \$22 million the first year.
- End in 2006 unless voters renew it.
- Establish a cap on the tax rate; only voters could increase it.
- Share 45% of money with cities and unincorporated areas of Lane County.

This would *not* be a tax on your annual income. Measure 20-25 proposes a surcharge on income taxes paid to Oregon. For example, for every \$1000 of net income taxes, you would pay \$80.

To figure out how much you would pay, look at last year's tax return and multiply the amount on line 43 on Oregon Form 40, or line 23 on Oregon Form 40S, by .08. This is deductible if you itemize on your federal tax return.

Measure 20-25 will be on the November 1999 vote-by-mail ballot.

For More Information
Call 541-953-3466
www.co.lane.or.us

Lane County, 125 East 8th Ave., Eugene, OR 97401

