

Casino hearings: 'big success because of members who testified'

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Besides the tribal members, others testified in favor of the gorge casino.

Matt Wynne, secretary of the Spokane Tribe, said, "We support Warm Springs and its great vision for the future."

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, he said, "Have done much for the salmon and steelhead, and will always their guardians. I feel strongly it is the Warm Springs sovereign right to bring economic self-sufficiency to their tribes."

Non-Indians also spoke in favor of the proposal. Mayor of Cascade Locks Roger Freeborn said the project would have great positive impacts on the area, in comparison to any negative impacts.

He also commented that the gorge casino proposal has prob-

ably been the subject of more public scrutiny than any other building in the history of the state.

There were five public hearings on the draft environmental impact statement, when usually there are one or two, and the public comment period is being left open longer than usual.

After May 15, the BIA will close the public record to further comment, unless the agency decided to extend the comment period, said Howard Arnett, tribal attorney.

The BIA might then ask the tribes if there is some additional information the tribes would like to submit to address any issues raised during the public comment period.

The BIA will then prepare responses to all the substantive comments made during the com-

ment period, and will then prepare a final environmental impact statement, which can be expected to take several months.

The final EIS will then be published in the federal register, and the agency will take comments on the final EIS.

The agency then prepares a record of decision and submits it to the Secretary of the Interior. There is no deadline in which the final decision has to be made, said Arnett.

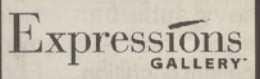
Arnett said that opponents of the project, the Grand Ronde tribe and the Friends of the Gorge, did not raise any issues during the hearings that were unexpected.

"I think it was a very big success for the tribes, because of the tribal members who testified."



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Leslie Mitts/Spilyay

Wilson Wewa (third from left) meets with the foreign delegates.

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The purpose, Tohme explained, is "basically to spread dialogue with all the countries all over the world."

The visiting group in particular is part of the Interfaith Dialogue, and will spend three

weeks in the U.S. visiting five cities and surrounding suburbs.

In addition to visiting Portland, the group will travel to Washington D.C., New York City, Austin, and Birmingham.

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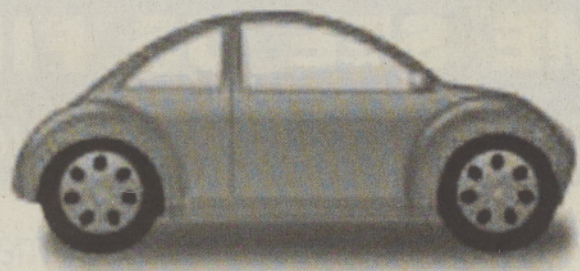
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