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Testimony, DEIS support casino

By Dave McMechan
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Much of the testimony of Warm Springs tribal members at the gorge casino hearings supported the findings in the BIA's draft environmental impact statement.

Regarding the environmental impact of the casino, and the economic need for the project, the testimony and the draft EIS were in agreement.

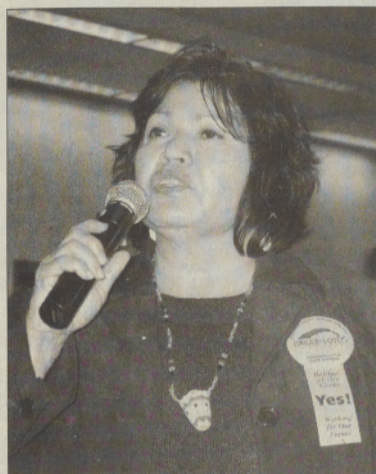
The draft EIS states, for instance, that the Cascade Locks proposal is consistent with the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act and Management Plan.

"The proposed project would be consistent with the intent of the act, which encourages growth and economic development in urban areas of the Columbia River Gorge," the draft EIS says.

The report also says, "Most of the project site has been disturbed by fill and previous development."

Similarly, many tribal members testified that the casino would be a very reasonable use of the property, which for years has been zoned for an industrial use.

Nevertheless, since the hearings, opponents have tried to define the issue as environmental versus economic concerns, with the opponents



Debbie Alvarez testifies at gorge casino hearing.

on the side of the environment and Warm Springs on the side of economics.

Clearly, though, that is not the actual nature of the dispute. Opposition from the Grand Ronde is economic, as shown by an economic study commissioned by the Grand Ronde, finding that the Cascade Locks casino "will reduce the Spirit Mountain Casino's dividend to the Tribe by more than 34 percent." This suggests that opposition from the Grand Ronde, at least, is economic and not environmental.

Opponents of the Cascade Locks have used another argument that is

similarly misleading, namely that each Oregon tribe should be limited to one casino on-reservation.

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs have said all along that the casino at Kah-Nee-Ta would close when the gorge casino opens, leaving just the one casino.

Tribal attorney Dennis Karnopp addressed the on- versus off-reservation question in an earlier article.

"All nine federally recognized Oregon tribes operate casinos, although only three of these tribal casinos are located on land that was established as Indian reservation land in 1988 when Congress enacted the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act," Karnopp said. "Those three are the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation's Wildhorse Casino, the Burns Paiute Tribe's Old Camp Casino, and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation's Kah-Nee-Ta High Desert Resort and Casino. The other six tribal casinos were sited on land that was not part of an established Indian reservation in 1988."

Regarding Spirit Mountain, for instance: "The land for this casino was not part of the Grand Ronde Tribe's restored reservation established in 1988."

See CASINO on 14

Tribes back \$900 million Columbia dam plan

The four Columbia River treaty tribes and three federal agencies this week announced the start of a public comment period for an unprecedented set of proposed agreements and comprehensive actions designed to improve habitat and strengthen fish stocks in the Columbia River Basin over the next 10 years.

The participants believe these proposed agreements will fundamentally improve the working relationships between the tribes and the federal government, focusing on common goals and ending decades of litigation.

"We came to the table with the federal agencies as courtroom adversaries," said Ron Suppah, chairman of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. "We leave that table now as partners."

Suppah said, "We have built an aggressive plan that fixes problems wherever the fish encounter them. We relied on people who work and fish on the rivers to tell us what should be done. Our objective was clear from the start — increase the health and number of salmon, steelhead and lamprey."

"We have set high standards for ourselves," he said. "and we will track and report our progress. Our plan gets the focus and energy where it must be now — on recovering fish, providing opportunity for our tribal fishers and on finding real solutions rather than

blame."

The new agreements build on "biological opinions" for listed salmon and steelhead and the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's fish and wildlife program.

They provide common goals and priorities for hydro system mitigation; additional hydro, habitat and hatchery actions; greater clarity about biological benefits and secure funding for 10 years.

In fact, as NOAA Fisheries prepares its latest biological opinions for issuance and filing with the U.S. District Court of Oregon on May 5, these agreements underscore that the new salmon plan is being developed with the highest-ever level of stakeholder collaboration and support.

"Working for the salmon is sacred work," said Yakama Nation member Fidelia Andy, chairwoman of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. "First and foremost, the Columbia River Basin agreements deliver certain and stable resources to do this work for salmon, steelhead and other species throughout the Columbia River Basin. The agreements will get our governments out of the courtroom and back on the firm ground of mutual goals and collaboration."

See DAMS on 14

New attraction popular at Kah-Nee-Ta Village pool

By Leslie Mitts
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Kah-Nee-Ta is hoping to slide in some new business with an addition to the Village Pool. They recently completed construction on a new water slide, and hosted a grand opening for the slide on April 5, in addition to a prior opening of the slide for tribal members.

According to Ian Hay, director of Marketing, the new slide is one of many improvements being made to the Village at Kah-Nee-Ta—and improvements are something they hope to be able to continue making in the future.

Having been open over 40 years, Hay added, "The Village Pool itself is kind of the showcase."

Recreation Manager Fran Moses-Ahern said the new slide is something that they've been hoping to be able to build.

"The slide is something that I've asked for for years upon years," Moses-Ahern said. "We were just happy that it came in this year before our season starts."

Tribal members were the first to use the slide on March 20 during Tribal Member Appreciation Day.

Lynden Harry won a raffle to be the first to use the new slide, Moses-Ahern said.

"We always like to try to have the tribal people use it first," she explained.

Many tribal members braved the slightly chilly weather to attend tribal member appreciation day to use the new slide and enjoy a free hot dog as well. "Everyone enjoyed themselves," Moses-Ahern said.

According to Delbert Garcia, facility manager, he's glad the slide is finally complete.

The project involved "a lot of headaches," Garcia said with a



Selena Boise/Spilyay

Lynden Harry won the chance to be the first to use the new slide during a raffle.

chuckle, from dealing with things like a change in operations.

In the end, he added, "We just successfully completed what we needed to do."

In terms of construction time, Garcia added, "The bulk of it didn't really take that long."

The plumbing system took the most time after requiring about a month for completion, he said, but the actual erection of the slide took less than a week to complete.

"There's a lot of steel and concrete involved in this project," Garcia said.

The pieces of the slide arrived separately and had to be sealed together on the ground and then raised up and attached.

"They had this huge gauge in order to get the degree of turn," Garcia explained.

Part of the process involved workers being lowered into the partially constructed slide with ropes and later pulled back out, he added.

"It was a lot of enclosed work they had to do," he said. "They got to all test it out, so they loved that."

They were lucky with the weather, Garcia added, because in order to erect the fiberglass portion of the slide they needed to have a minimum temperature of 40 degrees.

In addition, Garcia said, "We have to appreciate the contractor we have." Kirby Nagelhout Construction Company was hired to complete the slide.

In comparison to the older slide, Moses-Ahern said, the new slide is taller and larger.

The slide is 184 feet long and stands 12 feet taller than the other slide at 32 feet tall.

Plus, Moses-Ahern said, "Its fully enclosed which makes the ride a bigger thrill because its dark." "It's dark even during the day," she added.

The new slide does come with a height requirement—you have to be at least 48 inches tall in order to go down the slide, and they ask swimmers to be aware that the water at the end is 5'8" deep.

See KAH-NEE-TA on 11

Council approves fisheries resolution

Information is now available for tribal members regarding spring Chinook fisheries.

The Department of Natural Resources is announcing the 2008 spring Chinook fishery at Sherars Falls and the Warm Springs River as well as the Hood River fishery.

The Sherars Falls and the Warm Springs River spring Chinook resolutions were presented by fisheries staff to the on-reservation Fish and Wildlife Committee recently and later approved by Tribal Council.

Sherars Falls opened on April 1 and will remain open until June 15. The fishery is open seven days a week.

The fishery will be open for hatchery spring Chinook and hatchery steelhead only. All wild salmon and steelhead must be returned to the river unharmed.

Warm Springs Tribal Code 340.310(8) requiring that dipnets and hoopnets are attended continuously, and that nets and hoops must be attached to a pole, will be enforced.

For hook and line fishing the limit is one pole per person, and single hook only is allowed. Intentional snagging of fish is prohibited. Any fish that is snagged incidentally and is in viable condition must be returned to the river.

All Chinook salmon and steelhead caught are for subsistence purposes only. No sales to the public are allowed. Use of alcohol or drugs is prohibited.

The Warm Springs River fishery will open on May 10 and will remain open until July 31 from the Highway Three Bridge (the Kah-Nee-Ta bridge) downstream to the confluence with the Deschutes River, seven days a week.

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