

Gorge Casino Idea Falters

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compact because the land in question had not yet been approved as trust land for the Tribe. In the letter denying the compact, James E. Cason, Associate Deputy Secretary of Interior, stated the reason for denial was that the land must first be taken into trust under Section 20 of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act before the Department of Interior can consider approval of the compact. Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy stated that "Grand Ronde agrees with the Department of Interior's decision that land must be taken into trust for a casino before any compact can be considered."

Congressman David Wu (D-District 1) opposed the Cascade Locks casino in order to preserve "the crown jewel of Oregon's natural heritage," according to his press release on the Interior decision.

Congressman Greg Walden (R-District 2) supported the casino because of the potential for jobs and economic development. Walden also stated that if Warm Springs cannot put a casino in Cascade Locks, they "will most likely return to their plans to locate a casino east of Hood River on trust land overlooking the Mark O. Hatfield Park." The Hood River site,

however, has long been viewed by opponents as an empty threat.

Opposition to the Cascade Locks casino has come from a diverse group, including Grand Ronde, environmental groups, restaurant associations, family councils and others. In addition to Grand Ronde, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians have also stated that they do not support off-reservation gaming.

The next step in the process will be for Warm Springs to apply to have the Cascade Locks land put into trust; a process that could take a year or more. The process will involve a thorough environmental analysis with an opportunity for public comment.

No Comment — Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski (D), who helped craft the updated state compact that could pave the way for a Cascade Locks casino, has not publicly commented on the Interior Department decision, although his General Counsel has called it "a bump in the road."



Photo by Toby McClary

The Tribe is asking members to contact their local legislators and media outlets to help oppose the Cascade Locks casino. Below are many of the contact phone numbers.

The Oregonian
Email: letters@news.oregonian.com
Fax: 503-294-4193

Salem Statesman Journal
Email: drisser@statesmanjournal.com

Hood River News
E-mail: kneumann-rea@eaglenewspapers.com
Fax: 541-386-6796

Eugene Register Guard
E-mail: jwilson@guar.net
Fax: 541-683-7631

Governor Ted Kulongoski
503-378-4582

Sen. Gordon Smith
202-224-3753

Sen. Ron Wyden
202-224-5244

Rep. David Wu
202-225-0855

Rep. Greg Walden
202-225-6730

Rep. Earl Blumenauer
202-225-4811

Secretary Gail Norton
202-208-3100

Rep. Peter DeFazio
202-225-6416

Rep. Darlene Hooley
202-225-5711

On Memorial Day, Casino Nearly Burst At The Seams

■ Guests won a record 170 jackpots, of \$1,200 or more; \$92,000 motor home also given away.

By Ron Karten

With more than half a million dollars in slot payouts and a winner taking home the widely advertised \$92,000 recreational vehicle, Memorial Day this year was BIG for Spirit Mountain Casino.

"It's safe to say that we had our largest single day for slot activity and our largest single day for slot jackpots," said Casino Manager Randy Dugger.

"We had 170 taxable jackpots," said Slot Supervisor Jeff Johnson. Taxable jackpots are those worth \$1,200 and up.

"Mostly it was the pure amount of people," he said. "You couldn't walk around. The walkways were all plugged up."

To Johnson, it seemed like "at least every five minutes somebody was paying one or multiple jackpots."

Although the casino does not release dollar figures, Dugger said that the casino hosted as many as 11,000 guests during the day compared with an average weekend day when 8,000-9,000 show up over a 24-hour period to play.

Another telling statistic: "At one point," said Dugger, "we were down to 50 or fewer parking spaces out of 2,900 total."

"I worked two and a half hours of overtime," said Tami S., a clerk in the poker room, "simply because I could not get out of the parking lot."

But Tami, unlike many guests and employees, took a lot of pleasure in the tumult. "I'm in my element in the busy-ness," she said. "That's what I enjoy the most."

The poker room had enough customers that day that the casino would have had to add 12 more tables to accommodate them all, said Tami.

For awhile, employees coming in for

their shifts circled the casino's parking lots until employees ending their shifts moved their cars out.

"We experienced a short period of time where we were down to swapping

"Probably the biggest issue with that day was the difficulty with swing shift people that afternoon getting to the facility," said Dugger.

Security Officer Rod H., who nor-

"I know that everybody asked to stay and work did so willingly. It was an extraordinary day, and staff were extremely helpful, to the person, in doing what was necessary."

~ Randy Dugger
Casino Manager

parking," said Dugger. "It just took awhile for everybody to get situated. We didn't turn anyone away. We never closed the building."

Rumors swirled that the building was closed due to the crowds or that the casino was fined for having too



Spirit Mountain Casino

Photo by Peta Tinda

many people inside, but none of that was true.

"At no time was anybody at any risk or any danger from overcrowding," said Dugger.

mally only gets involved with traffic issues when concerts let out, was busy from 10 in the morning to nearly midnight handling traffic both coming in and going out.

The roads were so clogged that people said it was a two-hour ride to the ca-

sino from Dallas, normally 30-35 minutes from front door to a spot in front of the Million Dollar machine.

As a result, shifts had to be extended, often on a moment's notice.

"I know that everybody asked to stay and work did so willingly," said Dugger. "It was an extraordinary day, and staff were extremely helpful, to the person, in doing what was necessary."

Dugger sent out an email to all casino employees when the day was done.

"At moments like this, everybody was at their finest. Basically what I said was: 'Everybody understands that Monday was a busy holiday, busier than any of us anticipated.' It was the busiest and one of the most hectic holidays I've experienced here and I said, 'Whenever we are so busy and it seems we have reached the edge of chaos, everyone in the building stepped up their level of performance. You pitched in and did whatever was necessary to get through the day. There was no department that was not impacted by the volume of activity we have experienced. I'm extremely proud of the teamwork that I saw across all the departments. When we had something that needed to be done, we had two volunteers for every task. It was just an outstanding example of teamwork at all levels. I was very impressed.'"

The compliment included the work of many. In any given 24-hour cycle, roughly 970 people work at the casino.

"Pretty much from 10 AM throughout the day," said Dugger, "I think all of the table games were occupied and busy and certainly occupancy at slot machines was very high, probably around 90-95 percent."

The Casino Board and Tribal Council have been considering additional parking and food services for some time now, according to Dugger, and Memorial Day only "reemphasized our need to reevaluate."