

Report Reveals Long-Threatened Hood River Casino A Mirage

REPORT continued
from front page

Grand Ronde members continue to use the Cascade Locks area.

From the Grand Rondes' point of view, the issue is also a question of fairness. "We sat down with the Governor," said Tribal Council member Wesley "Buddy" West, "and asked him if off reservation gaming was going to be made available to all the Tribes in Oregon. He indicated it would not."

That all changed after the last election. Within days of Governor Kulongoski's election, the Governor, reversed his campaign promise of one casino on reservation land per Indian Tribe to allow the Warm Springs Tribe to build a casino on a parcel of land in Cascade Locks. The policy switch was only applied to the Warm Springs Tribe, none of Oregon's other eight federally recognized Tribes would be treated like the Warm Springs.

The Governor continues to hold to the policy switch in spite of the fact that public sentiment thinks poorly of all off reservation gaming. A Warm Springs casino, said Nick Graham of the Oregon Family Council, "needs to be on Tribal lands." Though the group is generally opposed to gaming, Graham offered support for the

Tribes' sovereign right to build a casino.

Michael Lang of Friends of the Columbia Gorge, called the Hood River area "one of America's national scenic treasures," and "not for the first off reservation casino."

The Warm Springs Tribe has failed to argue the merits of the Hood River study. Instead, they say that the Grand Ronde Tribe was terminated in 1954 and only recently restored, and question whether Spirit Mountain Casino is even located on reservation land.

"If you start from zero, thirty years ago, who even had a reservation?" said Louie Pitt of the Warm Springs Tribe. "The Klamath, no reservation. The Coquille, no reservation. The Grand Rondes itself, (put their casino) off reservation. So there are only three Tribes that did have casinos built on reservation land: the Burns Paiute, the Umatilla and the Warm Springs."

The Grand Ronde Tribe sees Warm Springs' position as disrespecting other Oregon Tribes. "Being somebody who lived here all my life," said Tribal Council member Reyn Leno, "I know our old reservation boundaries and our casino sits right in the middle of our old reservation. And anybody who lived here would know that."



Photo by Ron Karten

Tribal Attorney Rob Greene (l) and Tribal Council member Cheryle Kennedy (center) were present at the press conference.

The Warm Springs compact for a Cascade Locks casino was disapproved in May of 2005 by the Department of the Interior. The Department said that appropriate state and local officials, including officials of nearby Tribes, must first be consulted. Grand Ronde is a nearby Tribe. The Department also said that an off reservation casino on newly

acquired trust lands must be in the best interest of the Tribes and their members, and may not hurt the surrounding community. It is only after this determination that the Governor can decide if he will agree with the determination, and only then can a compact then be reviewed.

The Coalition study can be found at www.nogorgecasino.com ■

Renewables: In The Tribe's Future?

■ Dave Berger offers options to Tribal members.

By Ron Karten

For Tribal Council member Wesley "Buddy" West, renewables could "give Tribal members a voice in their future. As far as I know," he said, "Tribal members have never had a presentation that allows them to get involved with the Tribe's economic development, and I thought this was a good chance."

That's why he called on renewables presenter Dave Berger and his wife, Julie, to bring possibilities and ideas to the Grand Ronde community. In introducing Berger, West invited a group of 50-75 community members attending the October 14 meeting at the Tribal Community Center, "See if these ideas are worthwhile."

Berger is a retired Portland Community College (PCC) professor who has also spent four years in Africa, in Kenya and with the Massai in Tanzania. He also has worked with the indigenous people of Chiapas in Mexico, and seen solar cookers at work in Mali. With solar heat, you can create "cost-effective, on-demand" hot water for cooking, he said. "Face your home to the sun and you've created a passive solar heating system."

He spread a virtual library full of information across a table at the front of the room, and said that he sees himself as more of a clearinghouse than an expert in the field. "I can lead you to the experts," he said.

Among his projects over the years, Berger has brought injured wildlife into schools to teach about the wilderness. He has built trails through wild country where there were none before. And he knows about revolving loan funds that make money available for environmentally sound



Photo by Ron Karten

From left, Tribal Council member Wesley "Buddy" West, Dave Berger and his wife, Julie, at the Tribal Community Center.

projects.

"I think this is important for us to get involved in," said Tribal member Eric Bernando of Portland. "This will help us in the future because we need to be independent of casino funds."

"The way to get things done," said Berger, "is to have a personal relationship - kind of like what I'm doing here - to get things started."

"At PCC," he said, "we built a home of straw to show that it would hold up in the Northwest."

"On a large scale, wind is very cost effective," he said. With small hydropower systems, you can create electricity without harming fish. "But the most important thing you can do is reduce the amount of energy that you use."

Among the information available at

the meeting were two documentaries, one about the growth of solar power from the company, Solar Energy International (SEI) and the second about Tribal wind power efforts.

"The big wave coming is renewable energy," said an advocate for the SEI group.

"There's a huge amount of capital coming in for renewable energy," said another.

"Oil is about to peak or has peaked (as a source of energy)," said Berger. "We're not running out now, but we have to plan now for that day. And folks are learning by doing."

Not coincidentally, the process at SEI is to bring people in to let them learn "by doing," and then, (and they've seen it happen), each of the students uses their new knowledge to

create a renewable system for themselves while teaching others.

The documentary called, "Wind Powering Native America," described the efforts in South Dakota at the Rosebud Sioux Reservation to build a wind turbine. The finished product that started producing electricity in 2003, the Sioux believe, will "go a long way to building a sustainable way of life."

"It is clean and inexhaustible. It's been used for ages," said the Sioux, "but never on a scale like this."

The Tribe found a half million dollar grant from the Department of Energy to complete the project. The money enabled the Tribe to remain as sole owner. In addition, there is a market for clean energy credits among those who pollute, or in the case of the Sioux, those who would buy those credits for clean energy and then take them out of circulation.

In all, the Sioux have an income of \$100,000 a year from just one wind turbine.

In addition to the Sioux, the Mandan, Hidatsu and Arikara Tribes also have invested in wind energy. The Arikara, for one, say that they can produce 17,000 times as much energy as they need, making their potential investment in wind turbines valuable indeed.

The council has long acknowledged the value of diversifying Tribal income, and for West, renewable energy could be one answer to bringing that diversification to life here in Grand Ronde.

For more information, contact Tribal Council member Wesley "Buddy" West locally at 503 879-2353, long distance, toll free at 1-800-422-0232, extension 2353, or by email at wesley.west@grandronde.org ■