

Rodeo set for June 21-22 in Grand Ronde

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

The ninth stop on the Northwest Pro Rodeo Association circuit will occur June 21-22 at the Grand Ronde Rodeo Arena on the Tribal campus.

Events start at 6 p.m. Saturday, June 21, and continue at 1 p.m. Sunday, June 22. Attendees should allow for about three hours of rodeo events each day.

Competitions open to the public will include the stick horse race, junior ring toss, junior steer riding, junior barrels, donkey races and calf de-ribboning.

NPRA events will include bareback riding, steer wrestling, saddle bronc riding, team roping, bull riding, women's barrel racing, calf roping and breakaway roping.

Harold Lyon, chairman of the Tribal Rodeo Special Event Board, said that about 600 people attended last year's rodeo, but organizers are unsure how the escalating cost of gas will affect this year's event.

"Attendance may be down," Lyon

said. "We're hoping it won't affect our cowboys."

Scott Allen will be the announcer, Ike Prior the clown and Tyler Braseth the bullfighter. Stock contractor is BO's P9 Rodeo.

Cost is \$8 for adults and \$5 for children 5 to 17 years of age. Children under 5 years of age are admitted free.

Vendors are still welcome on a first-come, first-served basis. Cost for both days is \$50 for nonTribal members and free to Grand Ronde Tribal members.

"We've had a tremendous response to our vendor requests," Lyon said.

A camping area is available north of the Tribal rodeo grounds, and alcohol, drugs and firearms are not permitted on Tribal land. Dog are allowed only in the camping area and on leashes.

The rodeo is sponsored by Spirit Mountain Casino, the Grand Ronde Tribe, Pepsi and Boyd's Coffee.

For more information about the Northwest Pro Rodeo Association, go to www.nwprorodeo.org on the Internet or call Lyon at 971-237-5775. ■



Photo by Toby McClary

Bull rider Brandon Stackhouse, from Grand Ronde, gets some "air time" on his bull during the bull riding competition in 2007.

Cowlitz casino report released

'Flawed' Final Environmental Impact Statement IDs 'preferred alternative'

By Dean Rhodes

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The Cowlitz Tribe's attempt to obtain reservation land 15 miles north of Portland off Interstate 5 on which to build a 1.183 million-square-foot gaming, entertainment and hotel complex and Tribal governmental offices took a procedural step forward on May 30 when the Department of Interior's Final Environmental Impact Statement picked it as the preferred alternative.

However, casino opponents, including Citizens Against Reservation Shopping and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, called the Final Environmental Impact Statement flawed.

"There are serious problems with the FEIS which Grand Ronde will be demonstrating in comments to the BIA," said Tribal Attorney Rob Greene.

"Unless there has been a total overhaul of this work since we last saw it (a draft was released in March 2007), the EIS remains in serious trouble," said Ed Lynch, chairman of Citizens Against Reservation Shopping.

"This is far from project approval," Tom Hunt, also with Citizens Against Reservation Shopping, said. "We could be years away from a final decision."

Citizens Against Reservation Shopping cites, among other flaws, the city of Vancouver's criticism that the final statement does not consider alternative sites north of La Center, which are closer to the center of the Cowlitz Tribe's population and ancestral homelands.

According to the Final Environmental Impact Statement, there are approximately 3,550 Cowlitz Tribal members and 1,136 — or about 32 percent — live farther north in Cowlitz, Thurston and Pierce counties in Washington state. Only 95

How to comment

Tribal members can send comments by June 30 regarding the Cowlitz Indian Tribe Trust Acquisition and Casino Project Final Environmental Impact Statement to:

- ◆ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northwest Regional Office, 911 N.E. 11th Ave., Portland, OR 97232.
- ◆ Phone: 503-231-6749
- ◆ Fax: 503-231-2275

The Final Environmental Impact Statement can be found on the Web at www.cowlitzeis.com/.

Cowlitz Tribal members — 3 percent — live in Clark County, where the Tribe proposes to site a reservation and build a casino.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde also opposes the Cowlitz's attempt to gain reservation land and build a casino in Clark County, noting that the Cowlitz ancestral homelands are about 50 miles farther north near present-day Vader and Toledo.

"Grand Ronde considers Clark County part of its 'Non-Treaty Homelands' and 'Cultural Interest Lands,' and has or is consulting with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, the Washington Department of Transportation and other agencies on various projects in Clark County," the Tribe said in comments submitted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in July 2006 regarding the Cowlitz Trust Acquisition and Casino Project.

The Grand Ronde Tribe also ex-

pressed strong concerns about the effect a La Center casino would have on the Tribe and its ability to continue providing services and benefits to its members.

"The opening of a new casino in La Center will significantly reduce the revenues of Grand Ronde's on-reservation casino," the 2006 com-

ments state. "Spirit Mountain Casino is the Tribe's primary revenue source and supports essential services to Grand Ronde members, such as health care, housing and education. ... All these programs, services and resources will be severely harmed if a casino is built by the Cowlitz Tribe in La Center."

Tribal member and lobbyist Justin Martin of Perseverance Strategies Inc. has said at numerous Tribal meetings that the La Center casino could reduce Spirit Mountain Casino's revenue by 36 percent in 2013, which would mean a 47.7 reduction in the dividend paid to

the Tribe.

The Cowlitz Tribe is requesting that the Bureau of Indian Affairs take into trust about 152 acres and the Secretary of the Interior to issue a reservation proclamation.

The Cowlitz, recognized as a Tribe in January 2002 and currently landless, would then develop a casino-resort complex and Tribal government facilities on the land in partnership with the Mohegan Tribe in Connecticut.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement's Executive Summary also argued against many of the rationales offered by area residents against the Cowlitz casino proposal. Those concerns included adverse environmental impacts, budgetary drains on nearby public services and contributing to problem gambling.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement also dismissed concerns expressed by local school districts about an influx of construction and casino workers' children overcrowding their classrooms.

"Approximately 90 percent of employees are anticipated to currently reside in Clark and Cowlitz counties," the statement said.

The Department of Interior will accept comments on the final statement until June 30 and a record of decision will follow at an undetermined date.

"We've got a long ways to go yet," said Stanley Speaks, Bureau of Indian Affairs Northwest regional director, about the Cowlitz proposal to the *Longview Daily News* in a story published on June 9.

In addition, legal challenges might ensue. The city of Vancouver already has filed a lawsuit challenging the Cowlitz Tribe's strategy for dealing with the demise of its 2004 memorandum of understanding with Clark County. ■

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**~ Tribal Attorney
Rob Greene**