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June 13, 2025

Mr. Phillip Bristol
Acting Director, Office of Indian Gaming
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW, MS-3543
Washington, D.C. 20240
IndianGaming@BIA.gov

Re: Request for Rescission of Gaming Eligibility Determination – Vallejo Site (Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians)

Dear Acting Director Bristol,

I write to urge the U.S. Department of the Interior to rescind its Gaming Eligibility Determination regarding the proposed casino project in Vallejo, California, by the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians. In my view, the proposed site does not meet the necessary requirements of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) to meet the “restored lands” exception.

I strongly support tribal sovereignty and legally sanctioned tribal gaming conducted in accordance with IGRA. Tribal gaming has provided significant benefits for many Native communities, and I support its appropriate implementation. However, the expansion of gaming operations onto newly acquired lands must be held to a rigorous legal and historical standard—particularly in California, where 109 federally recognized tribes have well-documented historical territories.

The Department’s January 10 decision regarding the Scotts Valley Band significantly stretches the scope of the “restored lands” exception beyond its intended application. The evidence offered by the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo does not sufficiently demonstrate that the Vallejo site qualifies as land historically connected to the tribe. The site in question lies roughly 90 driving miles from the tribe’s ancestral homeland near Clear Lake. Even the Department’s own decision acknowledges that the parcel is not in the vicinity of the Band’s villages or burial grounds.

The decision appears to rest heavily on sparse, inconclusive historical references to a single individual’s possible employment in the North Bay region more than 150 years ago—despite evidence that the same individual also resided in and ultimately returned to Clear Lake. This type of isolated, transient presence does not amount to collective historical ties, nor does it meet the legal threshold for the restored lands exception.

The Department’s reasoning seems to rely more on broad policy aspirations than on a clear reading of statute or historical evidence. While I recognize and deeply sympathize with the

history of displacement suffered by many Native communities in California, those tragic facts alone cannot justify federal action that circumvents IGRA's legal safeguards.

Equally concerning is the opposition from other local tribes who do have deep and longstanding ties to the Vallejo area and remain important parts of that community. The federal government should not advance projects that create new conflicts among tribes or override the interests of tribes native to a given region.

Considering these concerns, I respectfully request that the Department promptly and permanently rescind its previous Gaming Eligibility Determination related to the Vallejo site. Doing so would reaffirm the Department's commitment to both legal integrity and the equitable treatment of all tribes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Doug LaMalfa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress