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Biden Administration Facilitates Desecration of Patwin Homelands

~Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation calls out Administration for Approving Scotts Valley Casino Project without consulting local Tribes and in defiance of nearly a decade of local, national, and federal opposition ~

Vallejo, CA – Today, in the final days of the Administration, the Department of the Interior approved the Scotts Valley Casino [Project](#), granting the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians the right to build an urban [mega-casino](#) on a cultural site considered sacred to local Patwin people. The project would be more than 100 miles away from Scotts Valley’s homelands, but at the core of Patwin ancestral territory in Vallejo, CA. For months, the Department of the Interior worked in secret to move the controversial project forward, undermining public notice, tribal consultation, and environmental review requirements along the way. In fact, despite being informed multiple times, by both Tribes and the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the required and important National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation process had not been completed, the Department knowingly and intentionally proceeded in violation of this bedrock law.

The Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation condemns the Biden Administration’s approval of the [Project](#) and their refusal to consult with local tribal governments throughout the process.

“We are deeply disappointed and disheartened to see this decision from the Biden Administration. It is difficult to believe that a group of politicians who claim to care about respecting tribal rights and sovereignty would give away historic Patwin homelands without ever consulting us. The hypocrisy is staggering,” said Yocha Dehe Chairman Anthony Roberts. **“We were excited and hopeful when Secretary Haaland was appointed but her legacy is irreparably tarnished by this shameful, illegal decision,”** Chairman Anthony Roberts continued. **“For Tribes like ours, nothing is more important than our ancestral homelands. To see our land and cultural resources taken away for the benefit of wealthy investors is painful beyond words. Throughout this process, we have been left in the dark, struggling to have our voices heard. We hope that the next Administration will take a different approach to consultation with Tribes, especially on matters that affect their ancestral homelands.”**

The Department of the Interior has [determined](#) on three separate occasions that Scotts Valley lacks the significant historical connection to the Bay Area needed to acquire land eligible for gaming. A ruling from

the U. S. District Court for the District of Columbia in 2022 returned the case to the Department of the Interior where it has moved forward without consideration for the Patwin people and their ancestral lands. In fact, every claim that Scotts Valley has made to demonstrate that it has a “significant historical connection” to the property in Vallejo has been squarely [refuted](#). Regardless, the Department has approved the project.

The Department cut Yocha Dehe and other Patwin Tribes out of the decision-making process—ignoring multiple [letters](#) asking for transparency and fairness and government-to-government consultation requests. Additionally, the Department has ignored almost a decade of [recorded opposition](#) from a wide range of government officials, [including Governor Gavin Newsom, and thousands of letters from concerned citizens across the country.](#)

The Department is required to evaluate the environmental and related social and economic effects of the project. However, instead of conducting a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement, the Department released a substantially shorter and inadequate Environmental Assessment. The assessment fails to meet even the most basic requirements of NEPA and [contains](#) incomplete, missing, and inaccurate site plans, some of which purport to show water flowing uphill.

“The Department of the Interior violated their trust responsibilities for all Tribes with this unfair decision,” continued Chairman Roberts. **“Although the project was approved, our fight is not over. The Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation will take every step necessary to continue fighting for our homelands and our future.”**

More information on the project is available at www.protecttribalhomelands.com.

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