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Department of the Interior to Reconsider Vallejo Casino Project “As Quickly As Possible,” Acknowledging Potential “Legal Error” and “Questions” About Gaming Eligibility

Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation applauds the Department’s commitment to prompt, fair reconsideration of prior Scotts Valley casino approval

Vallejo, CA – The United States Department of the Interior (DOI) has advised the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians that the agency will complete its reconsideration of the Band’s controversial Vallejo casino project “as quickly as possible.” In a letter sent to Scotts Valley Chairman Shawn Davis, DOI set out the next steps for wrapping up the reconsideration process.

Importantly, the letter acknowledges that DOI’s original approval of Scotts Valley’s proposed casino may have been based on “legal error,” noting that evidence submitted by local tribes and others “raise[s] questions” about whether the project site qualifies for gaming. Underscoring the seriousness of those questions, the letter expressly states that Scotts Valley “would be ill-served” by relying on the prior gaming eligibility determination while reconsideration is ongoing.

The Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, whose Patwin ancestors traditionally used and occupied the area now known as Vallejo and Solano County, applauded DOI’s letter.

“For years, we have asked the Department of the Interior to consider all the facts and evidence surrounding the Scotts Valley’s ill-conceived casino project,” said Yocha Dehe Chairman Anthony Roberts. **“We are confident the Department of the Interior will see what we have known all along – Scotts Valley has no claim to our Patwin ancestral homelands in Vallejo.”**

The original gaming approval was granted to Scotts Valley, a Pomo tribe based in the Clear Lake town of Lakeport, over strong objections by local Patwin tribes, Solano County, and the State of California. In March, DOI decided to reconsider the original gaming decision due to concerns that relevant evidence provided to the agency by local Patwin tribes, among others, had been improperly disregarded. Scotts Valley then filed suit seeking to block the reconsideration process.

On October 30, Judge Trevor McFadden of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, rejected Scotts Valley's efforts to invalidate the reconsideration process. However, he also ruled the United States must provide Scotts Valley with due process before permanently revoking the project's gaming eligibility. Yesterday's DOI letter appears to address both portions of Judge McFadden's ruling.

This is just the latest chapter in a long-running dispute in which DOI previously [determined](#)—on three separate occasions—that Scotts Valley does not meet federal requirements mandating a “significant historical connection” to [land on which gaming is proposed to occur](#). The agency's hasty approval of the casino project, in the closing moments of the prior administration, was met with mass opposition from sovereign tribes, [government officials](#), and thousands of concerned citizens.

For more information on the project, visit www.protecttribalhomelands.com.

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