



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**VIDEO: California Tribes, Elected Officials and Members of Congress Urge DOI to Reject Fast-Track, Devastating Proposed Vallejo Casino at Press Conference**

*~ Coalition calls on Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to immediately reject harmful casino project following an expedited, inadequate 45-day public comment period ~*

*A link to download today's press conference is [here](#). If you are interested in interviewing today's speakers, please email: [mrussak@signaldc.com](mailto:mrussak@signaldc.com)*

SACRAMENTO, CA – **Today, Thursday, August 22**, a coalition of California tribes and elected officials forcefully denounced the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) for their insufficient and inadequate [Environmental Assessment](#) of the casino project proposed by the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians. At a press conference hosted by the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, the group [urged](#) BIA to swiftly reject Scotts Valley's attempt to build a casino off-reservation—100 miles away from their homelands and on Patwin ancestral territory—highlighting the [irreparable harm](#) this project would have, including on cultural resources and environmental habitats.

The Department released the inadequate [Environmental Assessment](#) over the Fourth of July holiday weekend in secret—and tribes, local governments, and other stakeholders had to [fight](#) to extend the comment period from 30 to a mere 45 days. The press conference took place at the future California Indian Heritage Center site in Sacramento on the last day of the 45-day comment period.

**“This unprecedented, distorted public process, an attempt at a secret land grab, would allow Scotts Valley from Clear Lake, 100 miles away, and its wealthy Las Vegas Casino investors to build a mega casino on our land. This mega casino has no basis in law, policy, or common sense. And the Patwin people and other tribes and officials here today will tell you that this is wrong, not only for the Patwin people, for California tribes, and an Indian country as a whole.”** said Chairman Roberts at the press conference.

The document itself fails to take into account multiple issues with the proposed project, including the destruction of Patwin cultural resources, mitigation measures for the destruction of critical habitats for multiple endangered species, high-voltage powerlines that cross through the proposed site, and the impact of the casino on local traffic.

**“The proposed development would directly impact numerous culturally sensitive and sacred Patwin sites. These sites carry the weight of history representing Patwin villages and our ancestors who regarded this land as their homeland. The proposed use of the restored lands exception for taking land into trust as part of the Scotts Valley project misuses the regulation's intended purpose and if applied in this manner, threaten the integrity of all tribes’ ancestral lands,”** said Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation Chairman Charlie Wright during the press conference.

Today’s group of speakers are part of a larger, diverse coalition opposing the Scotts Valley casino project—including most recently Governor [Gavin Newsom](#). This week, Governor Newsom urged BIA to stand down on approving the project, which would use the “[restored lands](#)” exception of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act to allow a casino off-reservation if Scotts Valley can prove a historical connection to the land. Notably, DOI 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.

In addition to the Governor and U.S. Senator Alex Padilla, U.S. Representatives John Garamendi (D-CA-08) and Mike Thompson (D-CA-04) also oppose this project.

**“While I support Tribes’ self-determination and economic development, I have and will continue to urge the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to follow precedent and well-established safeguards with respect to Tribal gaming. A lack of meaningful engagement with impacted Tribes and other interested parties throughout this process would have lasting negative impacts on our community,”** said Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA-04).

As the expedited process continues, the group of speakers collectively asked concerned stakeholders to demand Secretary Haaland establish a fair, transparent, and fact-based review process—while warning that an approval of the project would be felt across the state for years to come.

**“We believe this casino would have devastating social, cultural, and environmental impacts to the communities and lands around Vallejo. Potential impacts to cultural resources, endangered species, and sensitive habitats that local tribes preserve. It must be taken seriously,”** said Yolo County Supervisor, Oscar Villegas at the press conference.

**“As Chair of the Solano County Board of Supervisors, I am outraged by the obvious irregularities involving the structure, length and time of the Public Comment Period**

**for the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians Environmental Assessment (EA). While we are very clearly on the record in opposition to the project itself, we are deeply troubled by what appears to be your agency showing favoritism to one recognized tribe over another,”** said Mitch Mashburn Chair of the Solano County Board of Supervisors in a [letter](#) to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Yocha Dehe’s comments on the Environmental Assessment will be released on Friday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>.

This Department of the Interior, led by Secretary Haaland, has committed to protecting the ability of every Native person to live safe and healthy lives in their homelands. The casino, largely funded by out-of-state donors, would defy this commitment by upending lands that are [recognized](#) by California’s Native American Heritage Commission as Patwin ancestral territory.

More information on the project is available at [www.protecttribalhomelands.com](http://www.protecttribalhomelands.com). Two recent letters Yocha Dehe sent to BIA are also available at <https://protecttribalhomelands.com/environmental-assessment/>.

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