

LETTER 30 (LOG # 452)

Jo Ann Wohlers

July 10, 2006

TO: Mr. Stanley Speaks, Regional Director
Northwest Region Bureau of Indian Affairs
911 NE 11th Ave
Portland, OR 97232

From: Jo Ann Wohlers
PO Box 644
La Center, WA 98629

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JUL 13 2006

INDIAN AFFAIRS
NORTHWEST REGIONAL OFFICE
OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

RE: "DEIS Comments, Cowlitz Casino-Resort Project"

Dear Mr. Speaks,

I am opposed to the Cowlitz Tribal Representative's proposal for a Casino-Resort at the La Center Junction and the Ridgefield Junction in Washington State.

Reasons for my opposition include:

- The land at the La Center site is currently zoned Agricultural 20 acres. This zoning is part of the 20 year plan. The proposal does not meet the current zoning of the land. 452-1
- The East Fork of the Lewis River will suffer from run off from development of the La Center site. This river is the home to many endangered species. 452-2
- Both the La Center and Ridgefield sites have extremely low crime rates. The La Center site is approximately 11 crimes per 1,000 people (mostly low level type property crimes). This is the lowest crime rate in Clark County. To build the 5th largest casino in America in this area will drastically increase the crime rate as it has been documented in other similar cases. The increase in crime will include more serious violent crimes. This will have a direct impact to the quality of life to the residents of this area. As Clark County Sheriff Erin Nolan said on a public broadcast recently, cows do not commit crime; with a casino crime will rise. 452-3
- Traffic and commuting would become a nightmare. The I-5 Bridge can hardly handle the traffic as it currently stands. A normal commute is approximately 45 minutes. To add another 104,000 trips a week will create trips that could easily add up to 2 hours or more of commute time. This will have a negative impact to the quality of life of residents currently living in this area. At this moment, parents have time to pick up their children from daycare and interact with them before eating dinner. If a casino creates more traffic, commute time lengthens; subsequently a parent may only be home to tuck in their child at bedtime. How do you put a price on the loss of time with a child? Once again a huge negative impact to local families and children. 452-4
- The wages being offered according to the DEIS are not enough for a family to survive on. The DEIS goes on to say that the wage midpoint of the lowest paid 630 employees would be \$17,090. A three-member household qualifies for food stamps at a household income of \$20,920. A two-member household qualifies for food stamps at an income of \$16,660. Clearly, many families with a sole wage- earner working at the casino would need assistance. 452-5

- The DEIS does not address future problems that the casino could create for the local schools. (English as a second language students, failed levies/bonds, lack of buildings.)

452-6

- Concern for Cowlitz tribe members who are fearful and intimidated to speak out against this project. Through this lengthy process I have developed several friendships and it is my understanding that many members of the Cowlitz do not want to have this project go forward at the La Center/Ridgefield sites. Some do not even want a casino and feel helpless to stop it. Some have expressed that there are no safe guards to protect their interest and who can they turn to that will defend their rights? Some have questioned why Clark County, when they would rather have land closer to their homelands in the Toledo area. Why does the DEIS not address their concerns?

452-7

- Being of Native American descent, I am concerned for members of other local tribes and the impact a casino will have on their quality of life. For example, members of the Grand Rhonde stand to lose a great deal if the Cowlitz are allowed to open so close to Portland. How would this have an impact on the Warm Springs tribe? Other tribes deserve to have their concerns addressed and the DEIS does not cover this area.

452-8

- The City of La Center will be one of the hardest hit if this is approved. To lose over 60% of its revenue will cripple the town.

452-9

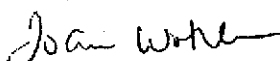
- This process has not been open and transparent. Why has a local citizens groups been denied access to information for over three years? Perhaps the process has not been completely legal, if so it should be started over. It is my understanding that The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) not only accepted a new application, it but has refused to extend the comment period on the Cowlitz Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and at the same time not provided public copies of the amended application and its attachments so that they can be considered for comment. Any continued consideration of the Tribe's application or gathering of comments on the DEIS, which was completed on the basis of the previously submitted and incomplete application, violates federal regulations and jeopardizes the entire review process. I can understand the simple unfairness of a government agency seeking public comment with deadline but failing or refusing to make the key documents available for review is completely wrong. I would request a 90 day extension to the Cowlitz Casino Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

452-10

The DEIS took a considerable amount of time to read and process through. To me is appeared to be a whole lot of nothing. There was a lot of words, but the DEIS really did not say much. Perhaps that was its intent. To bore people enough that they would just quit. I would like to know how good Analytical Corp has been a predicting impacts in the past. Sometimes to predict the future you need to look at the past. How many times have they been accurate in their environmental impact statements for other projects of this magnitude? I understand that they are a credible company and are professionals at what they do, but they are paid a great deal by the tribal reps and it has been said that money talks.

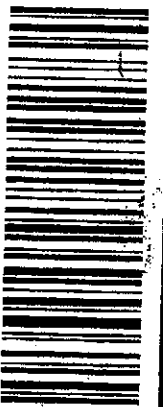
452-11

Thank you for your time and efforts with this issue. I appreciate your hard work.


Jo Ann Wohlers

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La Center, WA 98629

CERTIFIED MAIL



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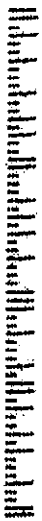
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