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Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians releases statement on Amador County Supervisors' costly lawsuit

SACRAMENTO — Rhonda Morningstar Pope, Chairwoman of the Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians, today released the following statement about the Amador County Board of Supervisors decision to continue appealing a costly lawsuit in federal courts:

“The Buena Vista Tribe has always maintained that the Supervisors’ lawsuit is without merit. We’re gratified by the U.S. District Court’s decision to dismiss the County’s complaint and deny the flood of motions filed by the County’s lawyers. It’s discouraging that County leaders are trying to keep the lawsuit alive, and it’s truly shocking that they’re using taxpayers’ money to pursue baseless claims to appease the political agenda of a few dissenters in Amador County.

We recently learned that the so-called “Friends” of Amador County have filed another lawsuit against the United States government and the State of California over our Tribe’s status and standing under the law. We expect that lawsuit to be found without merit, as well. And as a Tribe, we hope the people of Amador County recognize these disgruntled individuals for what they are: obstructionists. Our region needs private investment, jobs and economic growth.

“Now is not the time for costly lawsuits. The people of Amador County do not need this type of distraction. The Supervisors’ efforts thus far to delay our project have already cost the County potentially millions of public services dollars and hundreds of good paying jobs. We hope the County will now focus its efforts on working with the Tribe to implement off-reservation mitigation measures and invest millions of dollars set to be paid to the County by the Tribe. It’s time for County leaders to start acting in good-faith with respect to the contractual relationship created by their Intergovernmental Services Agreement with the Tribe. It’s time for them to stop the divisive politics and start reciprocating our efforts to be good neighbors, working together for the betterment of the County as a whole.”

Background

The Buena Vista Tribe and Amador County negotiated an Intergovernmental Services Agreement in January 2008, providing for the Tribe to build a gaming facility on its reservation land and implement measures mitigating the off-reservation impacts of the facility. But that agreement failed to get the required majority vote of the Amador County Supervisors, which then led to the Tribe seeking binding arbitration. Before arbitration, and during negotiations with Amador County leaders, the Buena Vista Tribe proposed a scaled-down version of the proposed gaming project.

The final plans for the facility, including construction and full-time jobs, along with one-time and on-going payments to Amador County include:

Public Services – a total of more than \$10 million in one-time mitigation funding and nearly \$8 million in annual payments for public safety, fire protection and other public services

- Nearly \$1.1 million upon start of construction for fire protection and emergency services equipment
- More than \$450,000 upon opening the casino for public safety and emergency services equipment
- More than \$1.3 million upon start of construction, and more than \$2.1 million upon opening the casino, for local fire fighters
- More than \$480,000 annually for additional CHP officers in the area and \$90,000 for four CHP vehicles
- More than \$2.6 million annually for County law enforcement and criminal justice services
- More than \$1.2 million annually upon opening the casino for local schools, the City of Ione and Amador County community services
- More than \$10 million in one-time costs to improve road and traffic conditions, improvements to a fire station, and other county mitigation fees

As part of the annual payment to the County, the Tribe agreed to fund a \$1 million community fund to pay for any unforeseen impacts. This money is spent at the discretion of the Amador County Board of Supervisors.

Ongoing economic stimulus

- The planned gaming facility (950 slot machines and 20 table games) will bring an estimated \$140 million in labor, building material and supplies, to the region's economy. The gaming facility is expected to create approximately 250 construction jobs and more than 800 permanent casino jobs once opened.

- Interested vendors can complete an application for work with the Buena Vista Tribe at www.buenavistatribe.com.

Local businesses can collect information on jobs and services needed related to the casino's construction process.

- A job fair for those interested in permanent casino jobs, including managers, security officers, human resources, marketing, gaming floor workers, and other professional services, will be held in the fall of 2011.

The Buena Vista Rancheria is located on 67.5 acres of Tribal land near Ione, Calif., within the boundaries of the Tribe's original reservation. The Me-Wuk Indians have lived on the Tribe's land since at least 1817.

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