



BUENA VISTA TRIBE STARTS OVER, OFFERS NEW ALTERNATIVES **New environmental report keeps promise with Governor and Legislature**

Tribe seeks public comment over next 45 days on new TEIR

IONE, Calif.—The Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians today released its Draft Tribal Environmental Impact Report (TEIR) for a proposed Gaming and Entertainment Facility on Tribal land near Ione. The new Draft TEIR process stemmed from a request by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's office to amend a similar report released in 2005. Instead, the Tribe went a step further—started the process over from the beginning, prepared a new Draft TEIR, and proposed new alternatives, including a Phased Project.

The full proposed project, which consists of 71,525 square feet of gaming floor with 2,000 slots and 80 table games, is expected to create nearly 2,000 new jobs once opened and bring an estimated \$10 million a month in payroll to the region. During construction, which would last approximately 14 months, an estimated \$140 million of labor and building expenses will contribute to the region's economy. The facility could open by the end of 2008.

"We started over as a gesture of good faith, to let the Governor, Legislature and people of Amador County know that we want to do what is right," said Tribal Chairwoman Rhonda L. Morningstar Pope. "Our Phased Project Alternative would start with a smaller gaming area, one that creates less of an impact on off-Reservation land."

Under the Phased Project Alternative, the Tribe proposes to open Phase One with a gaming floor of 32,900 square feet operating 1,150 slot machines and 40 table games. This is about half the number of slots and table games proposed under the full project.

The TEIR process is required as part of Buena Vista's 2004 Tribal-State Amended Compact, signed by Governor Schwarzenegger. That agreement dictates the process with which the public of Amador County, and its local government agencies, comment on off-Reservation impacts within Amador County stemming from the Tribe's proposed gaming facility. The purpose of the TEIR is to identify potential off-Reservation impacts from the Tribe's proposed casino and to identify measures that could be implemented to mitigate such impacts.

"We want to hear the community's concerns, and we want this process to help answer residents' questions," said Chairwoman Pope. "We will carefully review all public and local government comments on this draft TEIR. We hope to address all public comments and plan on completing the Final TEIR later this spring."

The Tribe's phased project alternative proposes three phases with initial reductions in the size of the gaming floor. The first phase of the project would consist of 1,150 slot machines and 40

gaming tables on 32,900 square feet of gaming floor. Phase Two will have 1,650 slots and 60 table games. Phase Three expands to the full project of 71,525 square feet of gaming floor with 2,000 slots and 80 table games. Implementation of each phase will be subject to the terms of an Intergovernmental Service Agreement negotiated between the Tribe and Amador County, or by judgment rendered in arbitration.

After Buena Vista completes the Final TEIR, the gaming compact calls for the Tribe and Amador County to begin negotiations to reach an Intergovernmental Service Agreement. Should the two sides fail to reach agreement after a 55-day negotiation period, each side will then present its best proposal to an independent arbitrator. The arbitrator must pick one or the other's proposal in its entirety, without modifications. This "baseball style" arbitration process is intended to force each side to present a fair and reasonable proposal.

A special provision in the Compact states that the Tribe need not address alternatives that would cause it to forgo its right to engage in Gaming Activities authorized by the gaming compact.

The Draft TEIR highlights anticipated off-reservation environmental impacts associated with construction of the proposed gaming project, including air quality, wetlands, waste and groundwater resources, traffic, public services, noise, housing, land use and other environmental considerations. It also proposes various mitigation measures to offset these impacts.

Highlights from analysis in the Draft TEIR include:

- An expanded examination of all impacts to local law enforcement and fire protection, aimed at addressing issues that arose during last year's discussions between Tribal and County law enforcement leaders;
- A Tribal security force on the Reservation at all times and financial contributions by the Tribe to help pay for new County Sheriff deputies and payments to the County criminal justice system;
- A new Tribal policy reducing the availability of alcohol, not serving it on the gaming floor, but instead limiting it to dining areas only;
- A new reduction in water use—anticipated at 145 acre feet of water per year due to proposed use of recycled water; and,
- New compilations of traffic counts to determine new traffic volume estimates and when the proposed gaming facility would generate the most traffic.

The public comment period for the Draft TEIR extends for 45 days. The Tribe requests that interested persons offer their comments on the off-Reservation environmental issues in the Tribe's Draft TEIR. Comments will be accepted until the close of business on March 12, 2007.

Comments should be addressed to:

Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians

P.O. Box 162283
Sacramento, CA. 95816

Copies of the Draft TEIR will be available on the Buena Vista Tribe's Internet web site:
http://buenavistatribe.com/tribal_gaming.htm.

Copies of the Draft TEIR will also be made available at the Amador County Library branch in Ione at 25 East Main St., Ione, CA 95640.

The Tribe retained the Sacramento-based environmental consulting firm Jones & Stokes to prepare the new TEIR document. Jones & Stokes is a multi-disciplinary firm that provides a full range of services related to environmental planning and resource management to public agency and private clients. Jones & Stokes is noted for its work on projects such as the Caltrans' fisheries mitigation program, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Seismic Retrofit, and the Freeport Regional Water Project. Jones & Stokes' experience includes work on more than 4,000 environmental and natural resource reports and studies throughout the western United States.

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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