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CLARK COUNTY
WASHINGTON

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Clark County to appeal Cowlitz casino decision in federal court

Vancouver, WA – The Board of County Commissioners has decided to appeal the federal government’s decision to put land into trust for a tribal reservation and casino for the Cowlitz Indian Tribe near La Center.

After meeting today in executive session to discuss legal options, commissioners directed county attorneys to file an appeal in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. The county intends to use in-house counsel for the legal challenge.

Larry Echo Hawk, the Interior Department’s Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, last month signed a record of decision to take a 152-acre site in unincorporated Clark County along the west side of Interstate 5 into trust and establish an “initial reservation” for the Cowlitz. The decision will open the door for construction of a hotel-retail-entertainment complex with 134,150 square feet of gambling space.

The county has until early February to file its lawsuit, which likely will center on:

- The Indian Reconciliation Act of 1934 and the U.S. Supreme Court 2009 decision in *Carcieri v. Salazar*, which restricted the federal government’s ability to take land into trust for tribes.
- The National Environmental Policy Act and the project’s final environmental impact statement, including its analysis of alternatives and ways to mitigate effects on the community.
- The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 relative to federal regulations.

“This should come as no surprise,” said Board Chair Tom Mielke. “For years, the county has raised concerns about this project and its effects on our community. Those concerns have not been adequately addressed.”

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