

Mike McCallum
Oregon Restaurant Association

Kevin Gorman
Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Tim Nashif
Oregon Family Council

May 9, 2005

The Honorable Gale Norton
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Via Fax 202-208-6956

Dear Secretary Norton:

We are writing to express our opposition to the proposed off-reservation casino at Cascade Locks in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, 30 miles east of the City of Portland. We urge you not to approve the proposed compact and additional administrative approvals required to site, build and operate an off-reservation casino in Oregon.

Collectively, our three organizations represent over 42,000 Oregonians. We've never before come together on an issue, but now are working together for a common cause: protecting the natural environment, protecting small businesses, and protecting our state and families from a radical change in state and federal gaming policies to allow off-reservation casinos.

If approved, this policy change would not only open the door to an explosion of casinos in Oregon, it would severely harm hundreds of small businesses because of increased labor and pricing competition and result in lost revenue to state programs, such as public schools, which last year received over \$400 million from Oregon's state-run lottery programs. Further, it would harm the scenic beauty and natural heritage of the Columbia River Gorge by endangering nearby bald eagle habitat and increasing air pollution and traffic congestion from the three million people per year expected to visit the casino. Off-reservation casinos in Oregon are not in the long-term best interest of our children, our families, the State of Oregon and the Native American Tribes that currently enjoy public support for their existing on-reservation gaming operations.

Rest assured, we respect the rights of all Native American tribes to build and operate casinos on their reservation lands. But we do not believe the state and federal government should adopt new policies that treat different tribes differently and that will lead to casinos far beyond what was envisioned when tribes were granted authority to build on-reservation casinos as a means to improve the lives of their members.

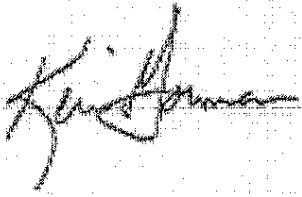
Oregon is a wonderful state, but a change in federal gaming policies to allow off-reservation casinos threatens our scenic treasures like the Columbia River Gorge, would lead to further moral and social decay with casinos located in and near our major cities, would hurt hundreds of small businesses because of competitive advantage and would cut funding for state programs that currently depend on a healthy state-run lottery.

It takes a big threat to bring conservationists, restaurant and beverage operation owners, and pro-family organizations together. But a radical change in federal policy to allow off-reservation casinos just minutes from Portland and Multnomah County neighborhoods is just such a threat. It's a threat to our beloved Columbia River Gorge, our fragile small business economy, our state schools budget and our families, who already face numerous societal challenges in raising children.

We urge you to help us maintain the current policies that permit each tribe a single casino on its reservation lands as a source of income and independence for members. We urge you to reject policy changes that allow off-reservation casinos in Oregon. Individually, our organizations intend to bring additional, more specific concerns to your attention on this matter, but we believe our collective voice should also be considered as you evaluate what is in the best interest of our state and nation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kevin Gorman, Executive Director
Friends of the Columbia Gorge



Mike McCallum, President/CEO
Oregon Restaurant Association



Tim Nashif, Political Director
Oregon Family Council

CC:

Oregon Congressional Delegation
Jim Cason, Acting Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs
George Skibine, Director of Indian Gaming Management