

May 11, 2005

The Honorable Gordon Smith
404 Russell Building
Washington, DC 20510-3704

Subject: Please oppose a casino in the Columbia River Gorge

Dear Senator Smith:

The Columbia River Gorge is a national scenic treasure that is loved by Oregonians for its scenic beauty, natural and cultural heritage and abundant natural-resource-based recreation. Now a shadow has moved across the Columbia River Gorge that threatens its very future.

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs have proposed the construction of a 500,000-square-foot casino resort in the heart of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Casino advocates are asking Interior Secretary Gale Norton to approve a proposal for what would be Oregon's first off-reservation casino, breaking Oregon's current policy limiting casinos to reservation lands.

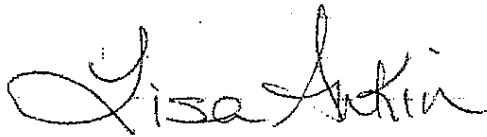
We are opposed to the casino proposal for the following reasons. The Cascade Locks casino proposal is estimated to draw three million visitors per year to the small town of Cascade Locks. The dramatic increase in traffic resulting from the casino would worsen air pollution and acid rain levels in the Gorge and increase congestion on I-84. According to a recent report conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, the Columbia Gorge already has a severe acid rain problem that rivals some of America's most polluted cities, such as Pittsburgh and Los Angeles. The levels of recorded acid rain in the Gorge can kill fish, amphibians and forests, harm the agricultural economy of the region and erode Native American petroglyphs and pictographs. To date, no steps have been taken to reduce acid rain in the Columbia Gorge. Approval of a mega-casino would only contribute to the air pollution problem that already threatens the Columbia Gorge.

Construction of the proposed casino would also cause harm to fish and wildlife, including nearby osprey nests and bald eagles currently located in the vicinity. The casino would lead to uncontrolled growth in the small town of Cascade Locks, resulting in pressure to expand the town into surrounding National Scenic Area lands. Finally, the approval of one casino in the Columbia Gorge may set a precedent for other tribes with interests in the Gorge to seek approval for additional casinos. The casino industry has long understood the synergistic effect of clustering casinos within a confined geographic area.

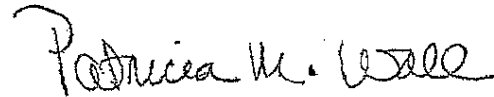
Secretary of Interior Gale Norton has the ultimate authority over tribal casino proposals. The undersigned groups request that you help protect the Columbia River Gorge for our children and future generations and prevent it from becoming a mecca for casino

gambling. We ask that you oppose the Gorge casino proposal and convey this sentiment to Secretary Norton.

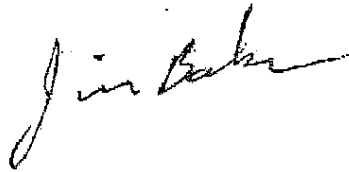
Thank you very much for considering this request.



Lisa Arkin
Executive Director
Oregon Toxics Alliance



Patricia Mead-Wall
Conservation Chair
Portland Garden Club

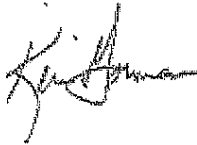


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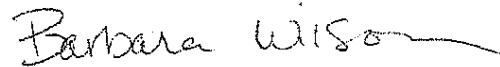
Robert Pregulman
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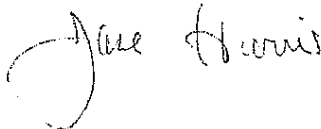
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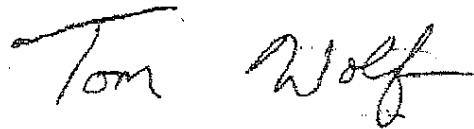
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