



Lytton Rancheria Opposes Federal Approval of Scotts Valley and Koi Nation Casino Projects Citing Flawed Process and Ancestral Land Violations

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Santa Rosa, CA—The Lytton Rancheria strongly condemns the Department of the Interior’s recent approvals of the Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians’ Vallejo casino project and the Koi Nation’s Windsor casino project. These decisions were made without proper tribal consultation or adequate environmental review. The approvals rushed through in the waning days of the Biden Administration, set a dangerous precedent for tribal sovereignty and ancestral land rights.

“These decisions are an affront to the sovereignty of impacted tribes and a betrayal of the federal government’s trust responsibilities,” said **Andy Mejia**, Chairperson of the Lytton Rancheria. “The Department of the Interior has fast-tracked approvals for projects that not only disregard historical and cultural ties but also ignore the devastating impacts on local communities and tribal nations whose ancestral lands are at stake.”

Scotts Valley’s Controversial Casino in Vallejo

The Scotts Valley Band’s proposed \$700 million casino and resort in Vallejo, spanning 160 acres, is located nearly 100 miles from the tribe’s base in Lakeport, CA. The project has drawn strong opposition from tribes, state and local officials, and environmental advocates.

“The Vallejo site sits squarely on the ancestral lands of the Patwin people, containing significant cultural and archaeological resources,” said Mejia. “Allowing a project of this scale to desecrate sacred sites not only erases our history but also undermines the principles of tribal self-determination.”

The Lytton Rancheria and other opponents have pointed out that this land is not historically tied to Scotts Valley. The Department of the Interior previously concluded that the tribe lacks sufficient historical connection to Vallejo.

Koi Nation's Windsor Casino Faces Similar Opposition

The Koi Nation's proposed Windsor casino, located just outside Santa Rosa, has also faced significant pushback. The Lytton Rancheria, other tribes, and local officials argue that the site encroaches on Southern Pomo ancestral lands.

"Like Scotts Valley, the Koi Nation's proposal represents 'reservation shopping'— choosing lucrative sites far from their historical territory purely for financial gain," said Mejia. "This is not what tribal sovereignty was intended to support."

The Koi Nation's planned 530,000-square-foot casino with 2,750 gaming devices and 400 hotel rooms has sparked concerns over increased traffic, strain on local resources, and wildfire evacuation safety.

Broad Coalition of Opposition

The Lytton Rancheria's concerns are echoed by California Governor Gavin Newsom, U.S. Senator Adam Schiff, U.S. Senator Alex Padilla, Congressman John Garamendi, Congressman Jared Huffman, Congressman Mike Thompson, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, the Solano County Board of Supervisors, the Windsor Town Council, and the San Pablo City Council. These leaders and local governments have voiced opposition to the projects, citing insufficient consultation, environmental risks, and adverse effects on local communities.

Governor Gavin Newsom's office emphasized the lack of transparency and consultation in these decisions, stating, "The Department of the Interior must uphold its obligations to consult with impacted tribes and protect cultural resources."

A Call to Action and Legal Challenges Ahead

The Lytton Rancheria, along with other affected tribes, vows to challenge these decisions through litigation.

"This fight is far from over," Mejia declared. "We will pursue every legal avenue to protect our ancestral lands and prevent these harmful projects from moving forward."

With the Biden Administration's term nearing its end, the tribe plans to appeal to the incoming Trump Administration to review and reverse these decisions.

"We urge the next administration to restore fairness and transparency in the federal decision-making process and to prioritize consultation with tribes whose lands and futures are most affected," Mejia said.

Impact on Local Communities

The Lytton Rancheria highlighted the potential strain these projects will impose on surrounding communities, including traffic congestion, increased crime, and environmental degradation.

“We stand with our neighbors in opposing these projects,” Mejia said. “The approval of massive casinos in already resource-strained areas demonstrates a lack of foresight and care for the communities that will bear the burden.”

A Dangerous Precedent

The approvals of these projects set a concerning precedent for future tribal gaming developments, allowing tribes to pursue “off-reservation” projects far removed from their historical territories.

“If this decision moves forward unchecked, what stops the next casino project from targeting major urban centers like San Francisco or Manhattan?” Mejia asked. “The Interior Department has eliminated key geographic restrictions, creating a free-for-all that could jeopardize tribal relationships and erode the integrity of tribal sovereignty.”

Looking Ahead

The Lytton Rancheria will continue its fight to protect its ancestral lands and those of other impacted tribes.

“Our ultimate goal is to ensure that sacred lands are preserved and that future generations can look to their leaders with pride,” Mejia concluded. “We call on all tribes and allies to join us in defending our shared heritage and rights.”

About the Lytton Rancheria of California

The Lytton Rancheria of California is a federally recognized tribe of Pomo Native Americans. The Lytton Rancheria of California owns and operates San Pablo Lytton Casino. The casino employs over 500 people from the San Pablo area. The casino spends millions each year on local goods and services and provides over half of the City of San Pablo’s operational general fund.