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May 13, 2008

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Stanley Speaks, Northwest Regional Director  
Bureau of Indian Affairs  
911 NE 11th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97232

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS  
NORTHWEST REGIONAL OFFICE  
OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

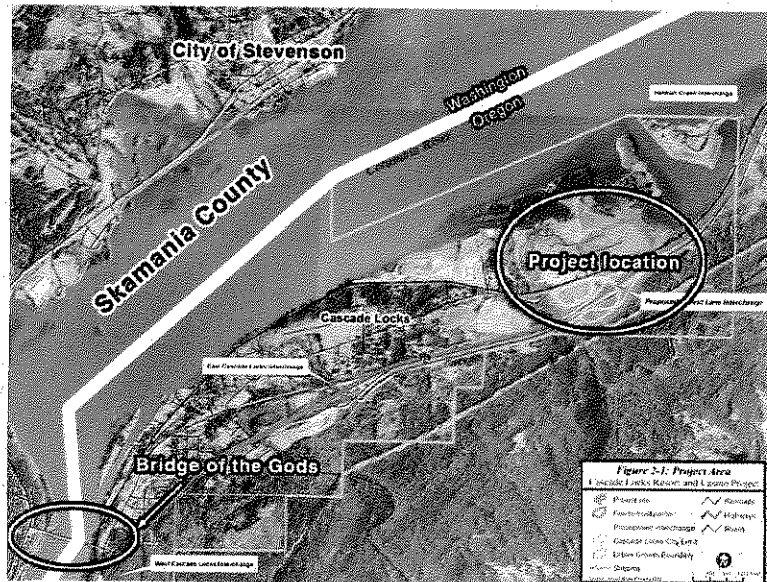
RE: Comments on the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Bridge of the Gods Resort and Casino Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Dear Mr. Speaks,

The Skamania County Economic Development Council respectfully submits the following comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Bridge of the Gods Resort and Casino:

**Skamania County should be specifically listed as a preferential county in receiving expenditures from the Community Benefit Fund**

The Tribal-State Compact signed by the Tribe and the Governor of Oregon on April 6, 2005 establishes a Community Benefit Fund to provide grants to benefit the communities of Cascade Locks and the counties of Hood River, Wasco, Jefferson, Sherman, Gilliam, Wheeler, Deschutes, Crook, Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington. The purpose of the grants are to provide resources to local agencies to 'meet the needs potentially caused by' (mitigate impacts of) the proposed project. Skamania County is located less than three miles (by road) from the proposed project and the local agencies in Skamania County will also require access to resources to 'meet the needs potentially caused by' the proposed project. Skamania County is not included in the list of counties eligible for funding through the Community Benefit Fund. Skamania County EDC respectfully requests that Skamania County specifically be listed as a preferential county in receiving expenditures from the Community Benefit Fund.



**A Skamania County Trustee position should be created on the Community Benefit Fund Board**

The members of the Community Benefit Fund Board of Trustees will be in a unique position to evaluate how the assets of the Community Benefit Fund are invested and used to meet the needs of the communities surrounding the project. The DEIS identifies the importance of the land base, infrastructure and resources located in Skamania County and the role these resources will play in supporting the project. It is important therefore, to consider the opportunities in the community located in Skamania County, specifically, the communities located within a ten mile radius of the project; including the Cities of North Bonneville and Stevenson, and the urban areas of Carson, and Home Valley (as defined by the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area). Skamania County EDC respectfully requests that a trustee position be created on the Community Benefit Fund Board for a representative from Skamania County.

**To preserve Skamania County's freight mobility and regional connectivity, the East Cascade Locks Interchange should remain open**

The Skamania County Economic Development Council respectfully requests the BIA to make an application to the Oregon Department of Transportation for a variance to the design spacing standards proposing that East Cascade Locks Interchange remain open with implementation of the new Forest Lane interchange as proposed and that the two interchanges functions as a single, split interchange. The East Cascade Locks Interchange (ECLI) is essential to maintaining Truck/Freight Mobility for the businesses located in Skamania County and is critical link in regional connectivity.

Maintaining adequate truck/freight mobility is a top priority for the Skamania County EDC. Adequate truck/freight mobility is essential for the economic vitality of both Skamania County and Washington State based businesses. Should the East Cascade Locks interchange be closed, all trucks headed to and from the state of Washington and Skamania County would need to divert off the high speed interstate system onto slower local road systems, thereby increasing the shipping time of freight, increasing fuel consumption, increasing pollution, and decreasing safety. Many trucks provide a variety of services in the area (i.e. postal delivery, UPS, Fed Ex, Skamania County and Washington State based business goods, etc.) and all of these services would be affected by the interchange closure.

The Bridge of the Gods acts as a key regional connection to the State of Washington, State Route 14 (SR 14), and the businesses located in the Cities of North Bonneville and Stevenson, Cason and Home Valley. Should the ECLI be closed, regional traffic to and from Washington crossing over the Bridge of the Gods would be forced to detour onto local collector roadways (either Forest Lane or the I-84 Frontage Road) in order to access eastbound I-84 and exit westbound I-84. Forcing commercial truck/freight traffic from Skamania County and Washington State onto more local routes would disrupt the connectivity for regional and local transportation networks.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

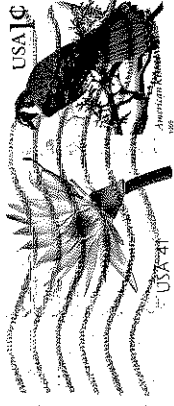
  
Peggy Bryan, Executive Director



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