



NIGC OPINION ON COWLITZ INDIAN TRIBE

Washington DC, November 23, 2005 — The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) has announced a decision on the Cowlitz Indian Tribes' gaming ordinance in the State of Washington. On August 29, 2005, the Cowlitz Tribe proposed a tribal gaming ordinance that included a description of certain property in southwest Washington, on which the Tribe plans to conduct gaming.

Commission Chair, Phil Hogen said "After careful consideration, the Commission has approved the Cowlitz gaming ordinance. Approving gaming ordinances is a significant part of our duties at the NIGC. However, this approval does not authorize the Tribe to conduct gaming on the applicable lands. In order to conduct gaming on this site, the Department of the Interior (DOI) must first accept the land into trust, and the Tribe must also exercise governmental authority over these lands." Chairman Hogen also stated "NIGC approval of the gaming ordinance is not determinative of the DOI's decision on the fee-to-trust process. DOI has an independent course of action with respect to the land into trust process."

During consideration of this proposal, many issues were considered, including the restored Federal recognition of the Cowlitz Tribe, the Tribe's historical and modern connections to the area, and the fact that the tribe currently has no reservation or other trust land.

The NIGC is an independent regulatory agency established within the Department of the Interior pursuant to the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988.