



## OAKHURST RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 1554  
Oakhurst, CA 93644



*(Citizens helping to guide community growth)*

March 31, 1994

Richard Lehman,  
Congressman, 19th District  
2377 W. Shaw, Suite 105  
Fresno, CA 93711

Dear Congressman Lehman:

The Oakhurst Residents Association is a non-profit organization of Oakhurst area residents concerned over rapidly expanding commercial development in the greater mountain area. We serve to provide a united voice for local citizens through which they can have significant input into the direction the community will take in the future.

We are greatly concerned over the proposal by the Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians to locate a gaming complex somewhere in the Oakhurst/Coarsegold area. This is an environmentally sensitive and unique mountain area with limited water and sewer capacity, even without a development of this large scope. In addition, the road system - comprised chiefly of narrow, twisting two-lane roads, is already heavily overburdened. We fear the loss of important social, cultural and scenic resources should such a development be located in an area which cannot sustain it.

While we have serious reservations about any potential gaming site in this area, we find the proposed Road 423 site the most socially and environmentally sensitive. Not only is it directly adjacent to an extensive, well-established residential area and a church, it is likewise dangerously close to the access roads to the Oakhurst school system. At this site, there would be no adequate buffer zone between residential, educational, religious and commercial uses. Construction of the full-scale gaming/entertainment center the Chukchansi propose would prove destructive to a number of already established uses of the surrounding properties. The additional traffic it would generate will, in and of itself, create a serious threat to public safety, making evacuation of the area in the event of a natural or man-made disaster extremely difficult.

Our organization participated, along with others, in organizing a town meeting on this proposed gaming complex several weeks ago. Close to 400 people attended, pointing to the serious concerns of the larger Oakhurst community over this issue. We recognize the need of the Chukchansi, as well as many other Native American peoples to secure a stronger economic base for their tribes. We support this, but do not feel this potential economic benefit should be achieved at the price of environmental degradation.

We have been in contact with Carmen Facio, the Bureau of Indian Affairs Realty Officer, on several occasions, have received and reviewed the Indian Gaming Act, and have carefully researched the environmental process under NEPA ( National Environmental Protection Act) which any site selection must undergo. We are also aware of the increasing national attention being focused on the entire Indian gaming question and potential proposals to amend the Indian Gaming Act. We believe there is strong evidence to challenge the Road 423 site in particular on the basis of the irreversible, negative consequences it would cause to both the human and physical environments.

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We do not seek a protracted environmental fight, but are prepared for one should that become our only option. We would like to enlist your support in assuring that the decision making process takes all mitigating factors into consideration. We appreciate any information you can provide on this issue, or any other individuals or groups to whom you can direct us for further insights.

We look forward to your response to our concerns at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joann Kessubrandt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

On behalf of the  
Oakhurst Residents Association  
Steering Committee