



North Fork Rancheria Project

Fiction vs. Fact – Fact Sheet (v. 5/22/08)



The North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians has proposed a regional destination entertainment and gaming resort to be built in Madera County along Route 99. In the spirit of transparency and constructive engagement, the Tribe has prepared the following summary to provide the community the facts and to dispel some of the fiction floating around Indian gaming, our tribe, and our project.

FICTION: *Approving the project would open the floodgates for off-reservation gaming.*

FACT: The North Fork Rancheria has applied to acquire new gaming eligible trust lands under a rigorous federal process—the so called two-part process—which requires approval by the Secretary of the Interior and the concurrence of the Governor. Only three tribes have successfully navigated the two-part process since the federal law regulating Indian gaming was enacted in 1988. The Tribe is pursuing this process based on its unique historical circumstances and its relationship with the local community. There is absolutely no evidence to support the claim that federal approval of the North Fork project would result in a significant increase in the current approval rate for requests under the two-part process for tribes with existing gaming facilities or otherwise. To the contrary, the federal government has recently added several additional hurdles to the two-part process which has resulted in the rejection of several dozen proposals nationwide. As a result, the North Fork project is one of just a handful of two-part proposals in the country which have been permitted to continue to move forward through the process.

FICTION: *The project takes advantage of legal loopholes.*

FACT: The Tribe is judiciously following the rules governing Indian gaming as established by Congress under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). The Tribe is also adhering to the principles established by the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) with respect to Indian gaming that emphasize transparency, mitigation of potential impacts and collaboration with local, state and federal governments toward a common purpose. There are no shortcuts or loopholes to this rigorous and lengthy federal process.

FICTION: *The North Fork Rancheria is “reservation shopping.”*

FACT: ‘Reservation shopping’ is a term popularized by the disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff in an attempt to smear legitimate projects and pit tribe against tribe. It is still being used today to imply the acquisition of new trust lands for gaming outside of existing reservation and historical lands for purely economic reasons. As with most smear tactics, the label is more myth than reality. The term is inapplicable to the North Fork Rancheria. Because our Tribe cannot viably build on its environmentally sensitive land in the Sierra foothills, we have asked the federal government to take other lands within our historical area under the process that Congress established to allow tribes such as ours to bring land into trust for the purposes of Indian gaming.

FICTION: *The land is in an urban area. This is not what voters voted for.*

FACT: The proposed site for the destination hotel and casino resort is in an unincorporated area between the cities of Madera and Chowchilla. The site is in a rural area/county within the Tribe’s historic land and was specifically chosen because it was not near schools, homes or churches. According to the Governor’s 2005 Indian gaming proclamation, the proposed site is not within an urban area. Furthermore, Propositions 1A and 5 were about providing Indians a means for economic self-sufficiency and called for “Indian gaming on Indian lands in accordance with federal law” without mentioning anything about rural versus urban.

FICTION: The project will overburden existing infrastructure such as roads, water, and law enforcement.

FACT: Unlike most Indian gaming projects, the North Fork project is consistent with the land use plans of the City and County of Madera. The site was selected in part to avoid overburdening the existing infrastructure. Like any development, the project will result in some environmental impacts. However, the North Fork Rancheria has negotiated model agreements with all of the key jurisdictions and governing agencies to mitigate such impacts and in many instances, to improve existing infrastructure and services. The Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with Madera County, City of Madera, and MID provide more than \$110 million over 20 years for public safety, education, economic development, housing, job training, parks and recreation, air and water conservation, infrastructure investment, and charitable contributions to local communities. Final infrastructure impacts will be addressed upon conclusion of the environmental impact statement, which is the most rigorous level of environmental review under federal law. At a time when many counties are calling for a moratorium on large-scale development in the ecologically fragile foothills, it makes perfect sense to build this project along a major transportation artery in the Valley capable of handling the increased loads.

FICTION: The proposed facility will increase social problems such as pathological gambling, crime, prostitution, etc. and destroy families.

FACT: This has simply not been the case locally or across the state and nation with the coming of Indian casinos. The local Sheriff is on record saying there was no increase in crime or illegal activity with the arrival of Chukchansi Gold in Madera County. Numerous studies on Indian gaming show positive social and economic contributions to tribes and surrounding communities with little negative impacts. A recent study by UC Riverside reports that tribal gaming in California has improved economic and educational opportunities for tribal and non-tribal citizens, financial resources that tribal governments need to provide essential services, build local infrastructure and promote economic development, and benefited poorer, rural communities such as Madera the most. Indian governments take social problems such as problem gambling very seriously. Indeed, they are the only state gambling enterprises – not the Lottery, card rooms, racetracks, private games, or Internet sites - currently funding public problem gambling help lines.

FICTION: There is little community support and significant local opposition to the project.

FACT: The voters of Madera County have repeatedly voted in favor of Indian gaming in statewide propositions by margins of nearly two to one. The proposed North Fork Rancheria development has the support of all the home county jurisdictions, many of the local agencies, all the home county business chambers, as well as nearly 5,000 local citizens, businesses, leaders and civic groups. To date, opposition has been limited primarily to those who oppose all forms of gambling, outside politicians and media, and a few local gaming tribes fearing competition who are willing to bankroll expensive media campaigns.

FICTION: The project will hurt Madera more than help it. The resort would detract from economic development if local businesses are hurt or tourists decide not come here because of the casino.

FACT: The North Fork Rancheria project has been carefully crafted to benefit a region in the midst of a serious economic, fiscal, and housing crisis. In addition to the MOU mitigation efforts cited above, the North Fork Rancheria project will bring much-needed jobs, business/ vendor opportunity, private investment, and entertainment and hospitality options to the region. The project will generate nearly \$100 million each year – or \$277,000 each day – in economic activity and benefits for the region as well as nearly \$100 million over 20 years in MOU community and public funding. Working together with other local tourism resources, we hope to create a regional destination tourism marketplace at the gateway to the Sierras and Yosemite and King's Canyon/Sequoia National Parks. The project will also greatly aid the Tribe in its dream of economic self-sufficiency and providing assistance to its nearly 1,700 tribal citizens.

Note: Even before the current economic recession, states and local communities have counted on tribal gaming as major sources of revenue. According to the National Indian Gaming Association, in 2006 tribal gambling generated 670,000 jobs nationwide (direct and indirect jobs created by Indian gaming's multiplier effect), \$8.6 billion in Federal taxes and revenue savings (including employer and employee social security taxes, income taxes, excise taxes, and savings on unemployment and welfare payments), \$2.4 billion in state taxes, revenue sharing, and regulatory payments (including state income, sales and excise taxes, regulatory payments and revenue sharing pursuant to Tribal-State compacts), and more than \$100 million in payments to local governments.