

Overall revenue dropped 6.1 percent at Northwest Indiana casinos in January, with only Majestic Star bucking the trend with a 10 percent increase in total take at its two boats at Buffington Harbor, according to Indiana Gaming Commission figures.

Casino operators said a number of factors may have influenced the year-over-year drop in

January revenue, including the fact the New Year's Day holiday was on a Friday in 2010, which made it possible for gamblers to stretch out their holiday weekend.

Majestic Star continues to attribute a string of revenue increases to an "aggressive" promotions and advertising push, which the casino began following the Cline Avenue Bridge closure at the end of 2009, General Manager Larry Buck said.

"At the end of the day, we were saying to people if you need to play, you need to play at Majestic," Buck said.

The two Majestic Star boats at Buffington Harbor raked in \$17.5 million in total revenue, a 10 percent increase compared to January 2010 revenue of \$15.9 million, according to the Indiana Gaming Commission's revenue report for January.

The largest chunk of the 6.1 percent drop in Northwest Indiana Gaming revenue was fueled by a \$3.9 million, or 8.6 percent, drop at Hammond's Horseshoe Casino. The casino took in \$41.3 million in January compared to \$45.2 million in January 2010.

Horseshoe General Manager Dan Nita noted January was the first month since May 2010 that overall casino revenue declined on a year-over-year basis in Northwest Indiana. He noted the year so far is getting off to a slow start, with the fierce snowstorms last week curtailing casino operations.

Although overall revenue at Horseshoe was down in January, Nita said the casino's market share of about 46 percent held steady.

Horseshoe continues to push ahead with solid promotions such as comedian and actress Whoopi Goldberg's appearance at Horseshoe's Venue theater Friday, Nita said. The Chicago Poker Classic tournament later this month also figures to be a big draw.

Casinos expect to participate in the nascent economic recovery that is under way, but since the industry locally had little decline during the recession, its recovery also may be slower, Nita said.

Ameristar Casino in East Chicago had the largest percentage drop in revenue. Its \$19.2 million in January represented a 12 percent drop compared to \$21.8 million in January 2010.

Blue Chip Casino in Michigan City had total January revenue of \$12.3 million, which was a 7.4 percent drop from January 2010 revenue of \$13.3 million.

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