

For a response from Jemez Pueblo Gov. Joshua Madalena,

[click here.](#)

For a copy of an updated economic study on the proposed casino, prepared by NMSU Professor Christopher Ericson, [click here.](#)

LAS CRUCES - The Mescalero Apache Tribe - owners of the Inn of the Mountain Gods, which includes a resort hotel, golf course and full-service casino - has now officially voiced its opposition to a proposal by Jemez Pueblo to built a hotel and casino just north of Anthony.

The Mescaleros and Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino

issued a joint statement Wednesday that said Jemez's proposed facility could hurt their businesses. The Mescaleros also claimed that Jemez's proposed casino and hotel would be within their ancestral homelands.

"The Mescalero Apache Tribe recognizes the right of every tribe to chart its own destiny and exercise sovereignty over its own tribal lands," a portion of the statement said. "In fact, Mescalero has been at the forefront of the fight for sovereignty over many decades. However, such sovereignty must be exercised in a way that comports with federal law and does not impinge on the rights and sovereignty of other tribes.

"Jemez Pueblo's attempt to engage in off-reservation gaming in Anthony, some 300 miles from its ancestral homelands,

certainly is not what Congress envisioned when it passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. In fact, Jemez Pueblo's proposed casino is an intrusion in that Anthony is within the ancestral homelands of Mescalero Apache Tribal peoples. Gerald Peters and Jemez Pueblo should not be permitted to open a casino so far away from home and in a way that will have a negative impact on existing tribal casinos, including that of the Mescalero Apache Tribe."

Jemez Pueblo Gov. Joshua Madelena said he was disappointed with the growing opposition, but added that those who oppose their plan to build a casino and hotel on approximately 100 acres just north of Anthony should mind their own business.

"As one of the poorest tribes in the state, we have never tried to tell other businesses or tribes what they can or cannot do, and we have supported other tribes that work to improve their standard of living," Madalena said. "...Instead of fighting us, we ask the Mescaleros and Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino (to) join us in establishing a working relationship that will benefit us all."

Since 2004, Jemez Pueblo, who has partnered with Santa Fe art dealer Gerald Peters, has proposed building the hotel and casino on about 100 acres off Interstate 10 at the junction of state Highway 404. The project would cost an estimated \$60 million, but approval from the U.S. Department of Interior must be obtained before it can proceed.

In 2008, plans for the casino were rejected by President George Bush's administration because the proposed site was too far from Jemez Pueblo, which is about 300 miles north. But with President Obama's administration taking over in 2009, the Interior Department is now reconsidering the plan.

With the joint announcement of opposition, Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino also released an updated study on the impact of the proposed casino. An original report was completed in September 2004 by Christopher Erickson, associate professor of economics at New Mexico State

University. Erickson completed the updated study last month.

The study concluded that the proposed Anthony casino "is likely to result in little or no increase

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in local economic activity. This is because the loss of revenue from existing businesses to the casino will substantially offset its benefits to local economic activity." The study claims "the loss of gross receipts tax revenue to the state and local governments could total as much as \$6.5 million per year."

The original study and the update was commissioned and paid for by Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino. Fulton has said the proposed casino would hurt his business by about 50 percent.

"The proposed casino makes no sense for the state of New Mexico, for nearby tribes who will be affected and for Jemez Pueblo who will not see jobs for their members as the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act calls for," said Fulton, in a prepared statement. Fulton did not return phone calls seeking further comment.

Anthony Mayor Ramon Gonzalez has said he would support efforts to build and open the casino if lawyers can assure him that the tribe's attempts to own and operate it are legal, and if tribal leaders and developers can guarantee that the additional jobs for his town will materialize.

Many Anthony residents support the plans for the hotel and casino, but feelings appear to be mixed among Anthony's board of trustees. Trustee James Scott has said he strongly supports the casino because of the jobs it would create. But Trustee Juan Acevedo has said he is concerned the facility would be too close to schools.

"We have to protect our children; they are our future," Acevedo said.

Fulton's efforts to prevent the opening of a casino within 50 miles of his facility have gone to the extent that he has promised substantial financial gains to New Mexico State University if another casino doesn't open.

"Those terms are still in his will," said Scott Scanland, of New Mexico Government Affairs, a lobbying and consulting company in Santa Fe. "Right now, those terms are valued at approximately \$15 million a year."

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The Mescaleros and Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino are not the only ones who oppose Jemez's plans. The Fort Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma is also trying to open its own electronic-bingo gaming facility about 50 miles west of Anthony, in Akela. Jeff Houser, chairman of the Fort Sill Apaches, has said his tribe remains "staunchly opposed" to the plans for a casino and hotel in Anthony.

But Madalena said there are plenty of opportunities for Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino and Jemez Pueblo to profit.

"Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino wants to maintain its monopoly in Do-a Ana County as well as its position as the most profitable race track in the state," Madalena said. "...If our project is approved, Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino will continue to have a monopoly on horse racing in the county and remain an excellent investment for its owners."

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Casino opposition

- The Mescalero Apache Tribe is now officially opposed to a proposal by Jemez Pueblo to build a casino and hotel near Anthony.

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- Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino and the Fort Sill, Okla. Tribe are also against the proposal.

- Jemez Pueblo wants to build an off-reservation casino and hotel on approximately 100 acres at an estimated cost of \$60 million.

- The U.S. Department of Interior is reconsidering the proposal.

- If allowed, the casino and resort would create about 950 new jobs at the casino, and an estimated 1,400 jobs to Anthony.

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