

MEDFORD, Ore. (AP) - The general counsel of the Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribe says it's a safe bet that another tribe's effort to build a casino in Medford will trigger lawsuits.

The Coquille Indian Tribe has purchased two properties and leased another in Medford. It plans to petition the U.S. Interior Department to place the purchased land in federal trust, opening the way for a casino.

"If the secretary of the Interior makes the determination, 'Yes, you can place it in trust,' the next day you can expect us and others to file lawsuits," Cow Creek general counsel Wayne Shammel told the Medford Rogue Rotary Club on Friday. "If the secretary of the Interior does not place it in trust, the next day you can expect the Coquilles to file a lawsuit."

The Coquilles announced last month that they had purchased a bowling alley and a former restaurant in hopes of opening a Medford casino along South Pacific Highway. The tribe also agreed to lease Bear Creek Golf Course, adjacent to the two buildings.

The Coquilles already operate a casino in North Bend, 170 miles northwest of Medford. They noted, however, that Jackson County is part of their service territory, and the effort to put a casino there won't be deterred by the Cow Creek.

"Each tribe is going to respond in its own way; our concern is to move the project forward," Coquille Indian Tribe spokesman Ray Doering told the Mail Tribune newspaper (<http://is.gd/gLMVpH>).

Shammel predicted the Coquilles will have a tough time winning approval because of the distance between Medford and their home base. The typical distance limit for a casino has been about 50 miles from the main area of the tribe.

The Cow Creek, Klamath, Siletz and Grand Ronde tribes also include Jackson County in their service areas.

"With all due respect, this is not Coquille territory," Shammel said.

The Cow Creek would fight the Coquille proposal to protect its own Seven Feathers casino in Canyonville, 70 miles north of Medford but conveniently located on Interstate 5.

"Medford is our No. 1 market, so this is aimed at our economic future," Shammel said. "We understand the Coquilles need economic development. We're sympathetic ... but it's hard to be too sympathetic when you are taking money out of our kids' mouths and putting it in yours."

Information from: Mail Tribune, <http://www.mailtribune.com/>

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