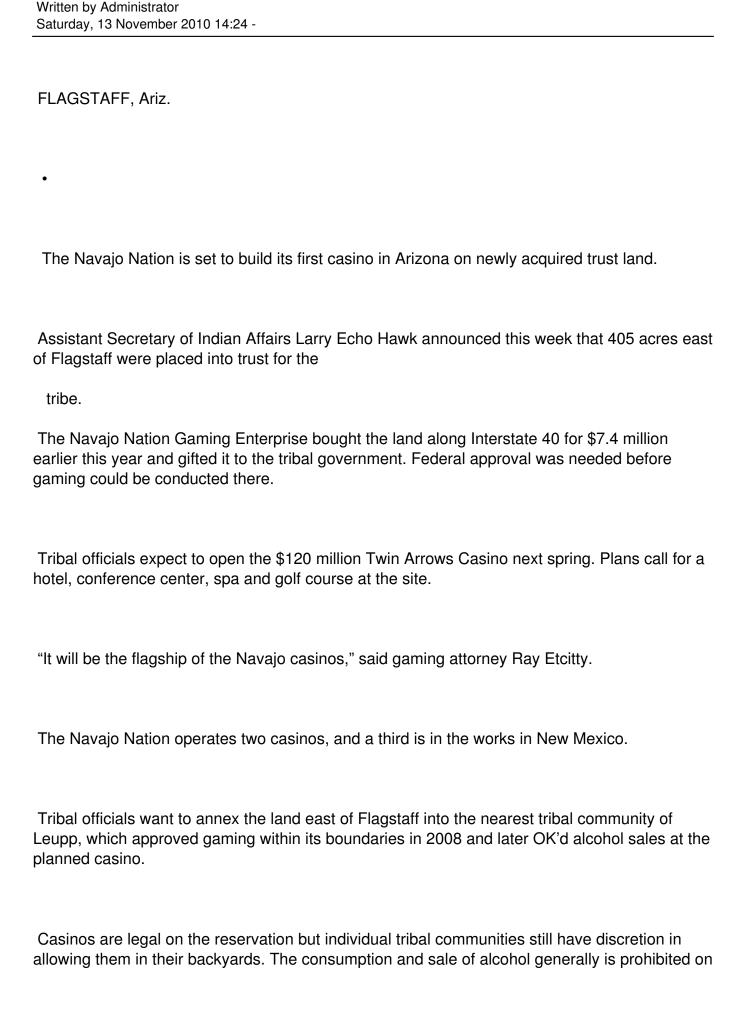
Navajo to build 1st Ariz. casino on new trust land - Salt Lake Tribune



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Written by Administrator Saturday, 13 November 2010 14:24 -

the reservation but casinos are an exception, as long as the local community wants it.

Thomas Walker, who represents the Leupp area on the Tribal Council, said the casino will boost the economy of the surrounding communities and could lead to other developments, such as housing for casino employees and emergency services.

"I think those are down the road, and that's pretty exciting that can happen as well," he said.

In his announcement, Echo Hawk said the project represents an important economic development for the Navajo Nation that will generate jobs in a time of need.

Tribal gaming officials originally chose another site in the general area but determined that it would take too long to gain the easements needed to reach the site from the interstate.

The Interior Department allowed the tribe to acquire the current site through laws passed by Congress that relate to a decades-long land dispute between the Navajo and Hopi tribes. In exchange for land the Navajo Nation lost, the tribe could select lands that were near the existing reservation for purchase.

Payments for the casino's business site lease will go to a trust fund meant to benefit those who were relocated, Etcitty said.

The Forgotten People, a group that includes residents tangled up in the land dispute, has questioned to what extent the group would benefit. The group's attorney, Jim Zion, said it intends to enforce the trust.

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