COQUILLE INDIAN TRIBE

1340 North Bayshore Drive, Coos Bay, OR 97420
Phone: (541) 756-0904
www.coquilletribe.org

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Federal Court Upholds Coquille Indian Tribe's Medford Land and Gaming Decision

Coos Bay, OR — A federal judge in Washington, D.C. has ruled in favor of the Coquille Indian Tribe, upholding the U.S. Department of the Interior's decision to place approximately 2.4 acres in Medford, Oregon into trust for the Tribe and to authorize gaming there. In a memorandum opinion issued today, September 4, 2026, U.S. District Judge Amit P. Mehta denied the challenge brought by the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, the Karuk Tribe, and the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, and granted summary judgment to the federal government and to the Coquille Tribe, which had joined the case to defend the decision.

The lawsuit challenged Interior's January 2025 approval on several grounds, and the court rejected each argument. Central to the ruling was the Coquille Tribe's Restoration Act of 1989, which restored the Tribe's federal recognition and authorized the Secretary of the Interior to take land into trust within the Tribe's five-county service area — Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, and Lane. Because the Medford property sits within that service area, the court agreed the land qualifies as "restored lands" under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, meaning gaming is permitted there.

The decision affirms the Tribe's authority to operate the Medford facility, which opened following Interior's approval in January 2025. The ruling is a final, appealable order, which means the plaintiff tribes may seek review in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. The Tribe will continue to operate the gaming facility and looks forward to directing those revenues to fund critical services, programs, and support for current and future generations of tribal citizens.

Chair Meade stated, "Today a federal judge confirmed what we have always known, that the Coquille Restoration Act allows us to provide for our citizens and rebuild our economy in the five counties identified by Congress. This ruling ensures our sovereignty is stronger than ever and strengthens our Restoration Act. We celebrate this significant ruling and also remember our past Chiefs and Elders who walked this road before us. They believed in this project when it was only an idea, and they trusted us all to see it through. Thank you to all who worked to get this decision today as well as our past Councils and membership for your unwavering support."

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Media contact:

Tim Novotny
Coquille Indian Tribe
Tribal Communications Director
1340 N. Bayshore Dr.
Coos Bay, OR 97420
541.751.7491
Mobile 541.404.1000
timnovotny@coquilletribe.org