



U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0552

September 30, 2009

The Honorable Larry Echo Hawk
Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs
1849 C St N.W., M3648
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Dear Assistant Secretary Echo Hawk:

I am writing in regards to an Environmental Assessment that has been prepared to accompany a land-into-trust application submitted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) by the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation (Tribe). Sycuan is a federally recognized Indian Tribe located within my congressional district and this application requests BIA approval for the placing of 30 parcels, totaling 1,966 acres, of their land into federal trust, which includes the known properties of Singing Hills Resort, Sloan Canyon, Smith Ranch and Starr Ranch.

It is my understanding that the Tribe's current plan for these lands is to build an RV Park, resort, events center, tribal housing and equestrian complex. While I appreciate the Tribe's desire to expand their revenue-generating resources, I do not feel that these lands need to be placed in trust in order for the Tribe to pursue these projects.

Further, based on prior BIA correspondence regarding this issue, I am concerned that the BIA does not currently have a policy in place to ensure that once land is taken into trust that it may only be utilized for identified purposes. For the best interests of all my constituents, both within the Tribe and the surrounding community, I firmly believe that lands taken into trust should be utilized specifically for purposes stated on its application. The inability of the BIA to ensure the community that these lands will not be used in another manner once placed into trust presents a serious problem with the application process.

Finally, I do not feel it is in the best interest of the community to remove these properties from local community influence and the collection of property taxes. While I understand that the Tribe has indicated that it would be amiable to working with the County of San Diego in an effort to offset this loss, it is important to remember that a termed financial agreement will not fully compensate for lands that are placed into federal trust indefinitely.

For these reasons, I oppose the Tribe's application to have these additional lands placed into trust status. I respectfully request that your office include my letter with those received for public response on this application. If you have any questions, or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me directly, or have your staff contact Michael Harrison in my office at (619) 448-5201.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Duncan Hunter". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress

DH/mrh