



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 10, 2007

Contact:

**For Los Coyotes: Tom Shields**  
(517) 372-4400 (o), (517) 449-9810 (c)

**For Big Lagoon: Jason Barnett**  
(415) 227-9700 (o), (415) 999-0917 (c)

## **Big Lagoon and Los Coyotes urge legislators to give gaming compacts fair hearing**

SACRAMENTO—Tribal leaders from the Big Lagoon Rancheria and Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeno Indians today encouraged the California Senate to hold hearings on legislation that would allow the Tribes to proceed with jointly developing a casino resort complex in Barstow.

The response follows the move by the Senate Committee on Governmental Organization to hold informational hearings on gaming compacts between the State of California and several members of the Tribal Alliance of Sovereign Indian Nations (TASIN). Despite requests by the Tribes, the Committee has not announced a timetable for hearings on the Big Lagoon and Los Coyotes compacts.

“We support the TASIN Tribes’ rights to self-determination and congratulate them on their successful efforts to negotiate new compacts with the Governor,” said Los Coyotes spokeswoman Catherine Saubel. “However, we implore the Legislature to recognize the growing disparity between the rich and poor Tribes in California—like the Los Coyotes who literally have nothing – and allow our compacts to have an opportunity to be heard.”

In January, Patricia Wiggins (D-Santa Rosa) joined co-author Senator Roy Ashburn (R-Bakersfield) and Patty Berg (D-Eureka) in introducing Senate Bill 157—to approve the Los Coyotes and Big Lagoon gaming compacts.

“The Big Lagoon and Los Coyotes compacts have provisions benefiting the Tribes, the City of Barstow, and the State of California. Our compact also plays a crucial role in preserving the pristine undeveloped state of the environment at Big Lagoon and creates a lasting opportunity for the Tribe to sustain ourselves,” said Big Lagoon Chairman Virgil Moorehead. “Unless the legislature ratifies the compact this year, the future of Big Lagoon may be decided by the Courts – an outcome that takes away the State’s ability to implement public policy.”

(more)

Labor and environmental organizations have been instrumental in leading efforts to ratify the Los Coyotes and Big Lagoon compacts. These include: The hotel and casino workers union (UNITE HERE), American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), California State Building and Construction Trades, Sierra Club, California League of Conservation Voters, State Parks Foundation, Save-the Redwoods League, Teamsters, California Coastal Commission, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Parks and Recreation and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

“Development at Big Lagoon would do irreversible harm to a truly unique, rare and irreplaceable natural place on California’s North Coast,” commented Save-the-Redwoods League Executive Director Ruskin Hartley. “We applaud and support efforts to continue to protect this extraordinary place.”

The Big Lagoon and Los Coyotes compact agreements have also been noted for the range of benefits to the State of California which include provisions for revenue sharing with the State, programs to address problem gambling, mitigating impacts to the local community including payments to the City of Barstow and environmental review, and recognizing the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively. The Barstow compacts move California forward.

“The 500,000 members of UNITE HERE, the international hotel and casino workers union, proudly stand with our friends in the Los Coyotes and Big Lagoon Tribes. We implore the State Legislature to include these tribes' compacts in all discussions of compact approvals," said Jack Gribbon, California Political Director of UNITE HERE. “Both the Los Coyotes and Big Lagoon Tribes are very poor and deserve economic development opportunities. If the legislature votes to create the largest single expansion of gambling in U.S. history for a handful of wealthy southern California tribes, who already have casinos, before addressing the needs of poverty stricken non-gaming tribes in our state, clearly, we will be seeing politics at play, not good policy.”

Governor Schwarzenegger announced compacts with the Los Coyotes and Big Lagoon tribes in September 2005. The City of Barstow has approved Municipal Services Agreements with both tribes. The Los Coyotes and Big Lagoon have submitted land-into-trust applications to the federal government and the Bureau of Indian Affairs is currently preparing a draft environmental impact statement to identify potential environmental impacts of the project. California lawmakers must pass legislation to approve the compacts, the final state step in proceeding with jointly developing the casino resort.

###

*The Barstow Casinos and Resort are designed to capture some of the market of an estimated 60 million cars that travel through the community on their way to and from Las Vegas each year. The projects will support approximately 900 construction jobs and 1,700 full time positions at the casinos. It is expected that the Los Coyotes and Big Lagoon tribes will contribute to the local community government yearly and generate millions of dollars in new revenue for the Barstow economy. The Barstow community has lagged behind the state in economic development with more than 35 percent of the residents on public assistance. More than 2,000 local residents signed postcards addressed to the Governor asking him to negotiate the compacts. More information is available at [www.barstowcasinosandresort.com](http://www.barstowcasinosandresort.com).*