

Lady Luck in another tribal venture

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Lady Luck Gaming Corp. has signed a letter of intent to develop a joint gaming venture with the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe.

Tribal officials had solicited proposals from several gaming operators and selected Lady Luck, said Ron Escobar, tribal council vice chairman.

The tribe initially plans to build a 30,000-square-foot casino, 100-room hotel and 200-boat slip marina on its reservation along the California shores of Lake Havasu, about 150 miles from Las Vegas. Lady Luck has three months to work out a deal with the tribe, he said.

Because Nevada-style gaming is not yet legal in California, the Chemehuevi project initially will entail only Class II gaming now allowed in the state, such as bingo and certain table games, Escobar said.

The project's first phase would be followed with a second phase if and when California approves Class III gaming, which includes lucrative slot and video poker machines, he said.

The venture likely will draw from Southern California and Lake Havasu City, Ariz., Escobar said. "We're looking at a more family-oriented crowd that's going to swim at our beaches, eat in our restaurants and gamble in our facility."

The tribe hopes the project's job opportunities will lure some tribal members back to the reservation, Escobar said, noting the first phase would employ 200 workers. About 150 of the tribe's 700 members live there now.

Lady Luck spokesman Rob Stillwell said the project is promising.

"Lake Havasu is already bringing in 3 million visitors so it's certainly already a popular destination," he said. And the project would be well-positioned, should California approve Class III gaming, Stillwell said.

—Marian Green