
Press Release: The Hopi Tribe

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Ancient Hopi Sites Funding Controversy

Cave Creek, Arizona-- On May 20th, the State Parks Board voted 6-0 to approve an appraisal of the Spur Cross property and to fund its portion of the \$15 million price tag for the 2154-acre ranch. This action followed Governor Hull's signing into law, a bill to create the Spur Cross State Park. The entire project, however, is stalled due to the controversy regarding the actual value of the property.

A state appraiser determined the value to be \$15 million, from which the legislative funding plan was based. The current controversy surrounds the appraiser's accuracy. Property owner, Herb Dreiseszun, has been extremely vocal in his disagreement with the appraisal. He believes the appraisal should be based on the value of the property. To further complicate matters, Dreiseszun, a 30% owner of the property, is in a legal dispute with the 70% owner of Spur Cross, Great American Life Insurance Company, over the ownership shares of the property.

Once the appraisal issue is resolved, the entire process of purchase should proceed, barring any unexpected legal maneuvers. The State is to pay \$3.75 million per year over the next three years from the General Fund and the Heritage Fund for a total of \$7.5 million. Maricopa County is to fund the \$7.5 million balance. The State's portion was included in the recently passed biennial budget. Half of the portion from Maricopa County will be included in the FY 2000 budget. This will be approved on June 21 with the their balance of funding participation to come from the FY 2001 and possibly, the FY 2002 budgets. The State Parks Board will administratively approve all final agreements pertaining to the deal and the transfer of ownership.

Another State Parks concern for the Hopi Tribe was the Homol'ovi State Park located near Winslow, Arizona. While Homol'ovi is fully funded in the FY 2000-2001 biennial budget of the State, there were discussions early in the Arizona State Legislative session to reduce the State Parks budget by \$305,000 per year by closing Homol'ovi State Park.

While most state parks have a net operating cost per visitor under \$5.00, Homol'ovi's net operating cost per visitor is \$8.26. This reason gave way to scrutiny and threatened to close Homol'ovi by the Arizona State Legislature. After a lengthy debate, funding for Homol'ovi was restored in the State Parks budget. Considering the high cost of running Homol'ovi, future funding for the park will continue to be of concern for the Arizona State Legislature.

Chairman Wayne Taylor and the Hopi Tribe's Land Team are continuing their efforts to work with Governor Hull and all applicable parties to secure the future of both Homol'ovi and Spur Cross.

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