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Local group opposes bill expanding Chumash reservation

By EMILY LESLIE, NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

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The newly formed Santa Ynez Valley Coalition is rallying local opposition to a pending federal bill that would allow the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians to annex a 1,400-acre parcel known as "Camp 4" to its tribal reservation.

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The coalition asserts that the bill cuts out local land-use planning, burdens taxpayers and threatens property values of local homeowners and businesses, said coalition spokesman Mike Brady.

Noting the Santa Ynez Community Plan had intended the land for agricultural use, Mr. Brady said the coalition aims to ensure Santa Ynez residents have a voice in land-use decisions.

"We are voicing our opposition to federal government intervention in local land-use planning. That's directly contradictory to what government is supposed to do," Mr. Brady said.

House Resolution 1157, or the Santa Ynez Land Transfer Act of 2016, passed the House Committee on Natural Resources in July, despite a letter penned by Santa Barbara County 3rd District Supervisor Doreen Farr and 4th District Supervisor Peter Adam urging the committee to defer, allowing local discussions to continue.

If the bill passes the House of Representatives and Senate and is signed into law by President Barack Obama, the tribe would be able to build housing for its members — for which it plans to built 143 houses — but would be prohibited from using the land for gaming.

"It's been quite clear they want to hold this threat of federal regulation over our heads," Mr. Brady said.

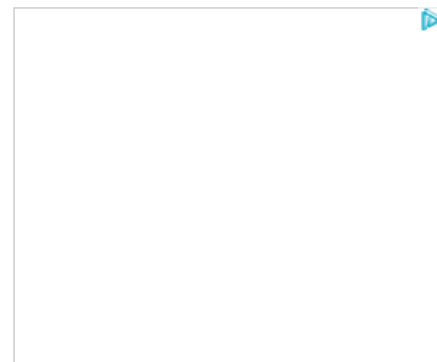
The coalition is comprised of local organizations Santa Ynez Valley Concerned Citizens, No More Slots, the Santa Ynez Valley Alliance and the Women's Environmental Watch.

"This is really a unified effort to oppose federal intervention," Mr. Brady told the News-Press. "There is community-wide concern about this."

But negotiations with the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and tribal officials are ongoing.

Since last year, nine meetings between tribal leaders and an ad hoc subcommittee of the board have attempted to hash out land-use and financial issues. The next meeting is tentatively set for Dec. 8.

The tribe purchased Camp 4, at the intersection of highways 154 and 246, in 2010 and began the process of placing the land into federal trust, effectively adding the land to its reservation, soon after. A draft document was provided to Santa



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Barbara County in 2011 and a land transfer application was filed with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 2013.

"We hope that we have the opportunity to present our side of the issues," said Tribal Chairman Kenneth Kahn in a statement to the News-Press. He could not be reached for further comment.

The coalition is holding a press conference at 11 a.m. today at Solvang Park.

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