

WASHINGTON STATE GAMBLING COMMISSION

SUMMARY

Mission: Protect the public by ensuring that gambling is legal and honest.

Foster full cooperation between tribes and the state based upon equality and a shared concern for the welfare of all the citizens of the state and tribes as a result of gaming.

Of the 29 federally recognized tribes in Washington State, 29 have compacts for Class III gaming and 21 of the tribes operate 27 casinos. The Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe changed its Shoalwater Bay Casino from Class III to Class II gaming on May 1, and the Cowlitz Indian Tribe opened its ilani Casino on April 24.

HIGHLIGHTS

In consultation with our tribal regulatory partners, we provided updates and participated in or organized meetings and training for licensing staff, Tribal Gaming Agency (TGA) directors, gaming executives, equipment manufacturers and tribal leaders. In partnership with the Kalispel TGA, we conducted a week-long new agent training course for 40 students. Topics included the history, licensing and regulation of Class III gaming in Washington State. We conducted a special three-day regulators training for 30 students with the Cowlitz TGA. We also met with 27 representatives from 12 tribes to provide training and answer tribe-specific questions about conducting licensing and criminal history reviews and license revocations.

We conducted meetings with several Tribal Lottery System (TLS) manufacturers to collaborate on an approach to ensuring that all parties understand the requirements of Class III Gaming Compact Appendix X2 and to ensure TLS submissions are not unduly delayed due to misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Appendix X2 requirements.

We facilitated meetings with representatives from the major independent testing laboratories that certify electronic gambling equipment in an effort to ensure that our electronic gambling lab does not unnecessarily duplicate testing already performed by the independent testing laboratories. We developed a process for reviewing the independent testing laboratories' testing documentation, which resulted in our electronic gambling lab issuing approvals more quickly.

We contacted numerous TGA's, casino operators, and tribal leaders to gather feedback about the testing process for electronic gambling equipment and to share what we are doing to expedite the testing process.

To help the Legislature, the commission and tribes prepare for future and potential gambling changes, the commission engaged an independent firm to conduct an economic market study on gambling in our state. The report was completed in November 2016 and is available on the commission's website.

In late 2016, we began posting Class III gaming compacts and amendments on our website in a summary document. According to feedback we've received, many people refer to this document because it is a quick read and easy to understand.

We mutually agreed to an amendment to the Squaxin Island Tribe's Class III gaming compact. The changes are consistent with other tribes' gaming compacts. We also mutually agreed to an amendment to the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe's Class III gaming compact. This agreement reflects current regulatory practices, reduces duplication between tribal and state regulators and clarifies the roles for each party.

We jointly agreed to 54 clarifications of compact appendices via Appendix A and X2 revisions and memorandums of understanding, and we concurred with 249 internal control and game rule submissions.

We agreed to a memorandum of understanding that allows a player's ticket to be used in both the Class III Tribal Lottery System and Class II player terminals. The state gaming agency monitors Class III gaming while the TGA monitors Class III and Class II. This agreement allows the two agencies to work together across jurisdictions.

We worked with the Cowlitz TGA for approximately two years to complete a pre-operational review, including processing about 950 Class III employee applications for the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's ilani Casino. The pre-operational review included meeting with TGA licensing staff to conduct application processing training and criminal history training, conducting ongoing meetings to discuss issues or concerns, and working with TGA staff to ensure compact provisions were met.

In 2016, we transitioned all tribes' access to My Account through Secure Access Washington (SAW). This portal requires two-step authentication, which further protects information sent to us by the tribes. We continue to add new features to My Account, including additional information requested by users and a "new look" that greatly reduced the amount of scrolling needed for users to access information. We strategically placed information in My Account so only one or two clicks are needed for users to access any function. This approach has resulted in reduced customer frustration and support calls. The system continues to improve efficiency by providing one place for the TGAs to access tribal gaming regulation information along with licensing and certification information.

STAFF CONTACT

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