

Smoke drives residents west

By Jessie Faulkner
The Times-Standard

EUREKA, Calif. — Heat is one thing, smoke is quite another.

After several days of wildland-fire-generated smoke, numerous Hoopa Valley residents with compromised respiratory systems are seeking a reprieve and heading for the coast.

Fifth District Supervisor Jill Geist said that the Northern California Indian Development Council has been making the arrangements to find lodging for the inland residents, many of whom are tribal members.

Meanwhile, those who are staying home are advised, Geist said, to stay indoors.

The Hoopa Valley Tribe declared a state of emergency Tuesday related to the health concerns from breathing the increasingly dense smoke, she said.

A tribal spokesperson confirmed the state of emergency was in place after the valley’s air quality reached the fourth of five stages of increased air pollution as determined by the tribal government. That rating had gone back to stage three late Wednesday morning, but tends to inch up in the afternoon, Northern California Indian Development Council Executive Director Terry Coltra said.

He said thus far about 36 Hoopa-area families are being housed in motels away from the smoke, all referred through Hoopa Valley Tribe’s K’imaw Medical Center.

Elders and younger people with respiratory issues are the majority of those being served, he said, both tribal members and other valley residents. Meanwhile, the Hoopa Valley Tribe just received a shipment of indoor air filter systems that should assist those with less-severe conditions to deal with the smoky air. The devices can be useful in removing particulate matter from the air when used in a closed room.

Part of the problem, Coltra said, is that Hoopa’s geography is subject to inversions -- a weather condition that keeps the smoke trapped in the valley.

The council plans to continue its efforts to house people referred through the medical center at least through Tuesday.

“We’re really trying to serve those most in need,” Coltra said.

But, the cost is one obstacle. The executive director said the council, the American Indian contractor for the state’s Community Services and Development Grant Program, is seeking additional assistance from the state. The council administers the program for 104 tribes in 57 counties.

One of the concerns, Coltra said, is that the available resources will be exhausted at the beginning of the fire season when other problems may emerge throughout the summer.

The North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District issued air quality alerts all week for very unhealthy air in Hoopa and several surrounding communities including Willow Creek, Burnt Ranch, Somes Bar and Orleans.

The district has five classifications for air quality: good, moderate, unhealthy for sensitive groups, very unhealthy and hazardous.

“Alerts are triggered when levels reach very unhealthy,” district Executive Director Rick Martin said.

Back injury can’t keep Begay away

By Bob Cohn
Washington Times

WASHINGTON — Cheer up, golf fans. Even though Tiger Woods won’t show up for the AT&T National at Congressional, there might be another outlet for any pent-up passions.

“Everybody loves an underdog,” Notah Begay III said, meaning himself.

Begay, who has not won a PGA event in eight years, is trying to make a comeback. Another comeback, actually. Everybody loves that kind of thing, too. Although, he said, “Shoot, I don’t know if it’s officially a comeback until you actually do something.”

Such candor adds to Begay’s appeal, and there is more, including a direct Tiger connection. Begay and Woods have been close friends since their days as roommates and teammates at Stanford in the mid-1990s.

Michael Connor / The Washington Times Notah Begay III described his condition as an “eight-millimeter disc fragment that sort of protrudes into my spinal column.”

But mainly, Begay is a singular figure in golf - the only full-blooded American Indian on the tour. He is half Navajo, one-quarter San Felipe and one-quarter Isleta. True to his roots, he actively helps further the financial well-being and business

interests of American Indians.

Begay is unique in another way: The 35-year-old is the only pro who putts both left- and right-handed. Despite a chronically bad back and a pronounced lack of recent success, he has been a persistent competitor. He is, in a sense, the anti-Tiger.

“I think more people can identify with the way I play golf more than the way [Woods] plays golf,” he said, laughing. “There’s a lot more people that can hit like I do.”

This is Begay’s fourth PGA tournament of the year. He ranks 241st.

“I haven’t lost sight of the fact that I still have some good years left in the game, although all evidence points to the contrary in terms of the way I’ve felt over the last few years,” he said.

Like Woods, Begay chooses his words carefully. Unlike Woods, no internal censor is needed to screen them. He is good-humored and candid, if not painfully honest. In addition to his faltering career, Begay has battled depression, chronic pain and the stigma of DUI arrests several years ago that led to jail time and profound embarrassment. He doesn’t hide, spin or sugarcoat any of it.

“A lot of people want to look at athletes and how they deal with their issues,” he said. “What we should be looking at is how certain ath-

letes recover from those situations. We should be looking more at how people respond and rebound.”

A former All-American at Stanford, Begay once shot a 59 on the Nike Tour and won four PGA events during his first two years as a pro but none since, mainly because of his back. He lately has played more on the European and Nationwide tours.

Begay describes his condition as an “eight-millimeter disc fragment that sort of protrudes into my spinal column.” He first got hurt while lifting weights just after he, Woods and the rest of the U.S. team won the 2000 Presidents Cup.

Begay, who earned a sponsor’s exemption for the AT&T, said he feels good now, physically and otherwise. One reason is his 5-month-old daughter, Antonella. After reinjuring his back at the Italian Open last year, he hired new doctors and trainers (and a new psychologist), “and it seems to be working well,” he said.

“I rely on a little bit of [anti-inflammatory] medication daily, but it’s really opened my eyes about chronic pain and what people deal with and how they get dependent on meds and so forth,” he said. “I empathize with people who deal with chronic pain.”

That led to his depression, which he has fought with the

help of many, including Woods. Before his playoff victory in the U.S. Open a few weeks ago, Woods talked about Begay, whose golf bag he used to carry at school.

“I’ve tried to be there as a friend,” Woods said. “I mean, he was like a big brother to me when I was on college. ... I’d do anything for that guy.”

“Tiger and my family and friends have really been supportive and have sort of carried me through this,” Begay said. “I’m just trying to stay positive, and I’m always hoping there will be a chance I can play at a high level again.”

Begay said he will miss not having Woods around this week. They often went to dinner while playing in the same tournament, “spending time on what was once our interesting single lives and now they’re interesting married lives with kids,” he said.

“What a great friend. It’s not the championships we won together; it’s our friendship. We’re the same friends out here that we were 20 years ago playing junior golf.”

Begay tied for 62nd at the Travelers Championship in Hartford, Conn., two weeks ago, but at least he made the cut. He appreciates the small victories.

“I stopped pinning my hopes on winning a while ago,” he said. “Mostly because I don’t want to go

Tribe may be fined for filing casino audit late

By Cathryn Creno
The Arizona Republic

PHOENIX — The San Carlos Apache Tribe, which runs the 618-slot machine Apache Gold Casino outside Globe, could face up to hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines by the National Indian Gaming Commission for filing an annual audit report seven weeks late.

The commission in Washington, D.C., is a regulatory agency that monitors Indian casino revenues and releases annual reports about casino earnings.

A copy of a violation notice that was sent to the San Carlos Apaches on May 30 states that the tribe was 49 days late in filing its paperwork this year. The fine for late filing is “an amount not to exceed \$25,000 per violation per day,” according to the notice.

The tribe has a right to a hearing and an appeal.

The San Carlos Apaches are the only Arizona gaming tribe to have received such a notice this year, the commission Web site shows.

Steve Titla, attorney for the San Carlos Apache Tribe, was not available for comment.

Bombing range



The Associated Press

In this photo provided by Emma Featherman Sam, bombed-out 1940s Era cars line one of the targets in 1995 that military pilots used as practice at the Badlands Bombing Range on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Tribe looks to build casino in Stanley County

By David Montgomery
Capital Journal

FORT PIERRE, S.D. — The Cheyenne River Sioux are planning to build a casino on tribal land on the shores of Lake Oahe in Stanley County, and tribal and county officials hope it will provide significant economic benefits to the area.

Tribal construction manager John Hunt, who is overseeing the casino project, spoke to the Stanley County Commission Tuesday morning to provide information about the project.

The next step for the casino is to seek approval from the county Planning and Zoning committee to rezone

the casino land to commercial. If approval is granted and construction proceeds, Hunt said he hopes to start operations in 2009.

Hunt said the casino will be a Class II gaming facility, with slots, blackjack and poker. The company, Global Gaming Solutions, owned by the Chickasaw Nation, will serve as general contractor. Hunt told the board that local companies should receive the contracting work.

“I don’t need to bring in other construction companies,” Hunt told the commission. “We can utilize some of our local output.”

Commissioners seemed positive about the proposal.

“I think it’s a good concept,” said commissioner Jim Stoeser.

The principal obstacles blocking the casino, Hunt said, are high costs to extend utilities from Fort Pierre to the casino site. He asked the commission Tuesday if there were any ways to lower those costs but commissioners were skeptical of how they could help.

In its final form, if approved, the casino will have a hunting theme, with an eventual motel and boat dock on Lake Oahe.

“It’ll be an economic boost, not only for Stanley County but for the Cheyenne Sioux Tribe,” Hunt said.

FBI lauds Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center

MINNESOTA (AP) — The winner of the 2007 FBI Director’s Community Leadership Award is Suzanne Koeplinger, executive director of the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center.

The special agent in charge of the Minneapolis field office, Ralph S. Boelter, gave her the award at a recent ceremony in downtown Minneapolis.

The field office gives the award every year to someone in its region, which includes Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.

Boelter called Koeplinger a “shining light” in the community and praised her for her efforts to help not only American Indian women, but the community as a whole.

Koeplinger has become a respected voice in the area of human trafficking, particularly of American Indian women.

The leadership award was created in 1990 to recognize people and groups that have made outstanding contributions toward crime prevention, education and community awareness.