

## **Sturgis drops plans to build shooting range**

by Bernard McGhee, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. - Defendants in a lawsuit over a proposed shooting range near Sturgis filed a motion to dismiss Friday, saying developers have dropped plans to build the range.

The development comes as welcome news to opponents of the shooting range, who said the range would be too close to Bear Butte, where American Indians have come to pray for thousands of years. Seven tribes and a local group sued to stop it.

On Wednesday, the Sturgis Industrial Expansion Corp. held a special meeting and decided that it was not feasible to build the range without federal money that had previously been available, court documents said.

Former Gov. Bill Janklow had approved \$825,000 in federal Community Development Block Grant money to the city of Sturgis to help pay for the \$900,000 shooting range. But a separate lawsuit was filed by Sturgis residents who were upset that federal money was tapped for the project.

After the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development questioned income figures used to support the project, Gov. Mike Rounds returned \$313,800 of HUD money that had already been spent and canceled the rest of the grant.

Jim Leach, a lawyer representing opponents of the shooting range, said Friday's motion marked an end to the dispute. His plaintiffs claimed that noise from the range would interrupt Indian religious ceremonies.

"I am thrilled and indescribably happy," Leach said Friday evening. "This was a project that never should have been started in the first place."

Leach said he still has to respond to the dismissal motion but said he would agree to it.

Donald P. Knudsen, the lawyer for the city of Sturgis and the development corporation, said the decision to scrap the project was prompted by a lack of money and not because of the lawsuit brought forward by the tribes.

"Without the federal money, there just wasn't funding available to do what they wanted to do," Knudsen said Friday night.

Knudsen said the shooting range would have been "a world class facility" and that members of the Sturgis Industrial Expansion Corp. were disappointed that it would not be built.

"It would have been a very nice addition for everybody in western South Dakota and to see it evaporate is very disappointing," he said.

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Supporters of the shooting range, which would have been called Black Hills Sportsman's Complex, said the range would boost economic development and give companies that make guns and ammunition a place to test and show their wares. It would have been open to the public and to law enforcement for training and education.

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