



January 8, 2013 – Ruidoso News – [Cruces backs Fort Sill Tribe](#)

*By Jim Kalvelage*

The Fort Sill Apache Tribe's effort at reestablishing a homeland in southern New Mexico, and opening a tribal casino west of Las Cruces, received support Monday from the Las Cruces City Council. The Interstate 10 casino initiative has been opposed in the past by the Mescalero Apache Tribe and Gov. Susana Martinez.

The resolution adopted by the Las Cruces City Council called on Martinez and the New Mexico Congressional delegation to back the restoration of the Fort Sill Apache Tribe "to a portion of its New Mexico homeland with all rights natural and historical associated to the homeland."

Fort Sill Apache Tribal Chair Jeff Haozous said the city council's support includes providing the same rights that other New Mexico tribes and pueblos enjoy.

"I am pleased that the Las Cruces City Council recognizes our rights as a sovereign nation and supports our return to New Mexico," Haozous said. "As we continue to fight to regain the rights that are naturally and historically ours, the passing of this resolution gives us support from our neighboring community. We look forward to receiving support from the governor as well."

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Interior granted the 30-acre location at Akela, N.M., as a new reservation. A sign was erected in November 2012 that declared the location as the home of the Chiricahua/Warm Spring Apache. The Fort Sill Apache Tribe, located in Oklahoma, has a bit less than 700 members.

The Las Cruces City Council's resolution was deemed by Haozous as support to engage in economic development.

Five years ago, the tribe attempted to open a casino along the Interstate, about 20 miles east of Deming. Then Gov. Bill Richardson ordered police in to blockade any effort at opening the casino's doors.

As recently August 2011, then Mescalero Apache Tribal President Mark Chino voiced opposition to a Fort Sill casino at Akela Flats in testimony before the New Mexico Legislature's Interim Indian Affairs Committee. He noted the Las Cruces/El Paso market was a primary market for Mescalero's Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort and Casino.

An effort to contact current Mescalero Apache President Frederick Chino, Sr. was unsuccessful.