



Mill Bay camper suit now class action

By Laurie Smith, World staff writer

WENATCHEE - Before a packed courtroom on Wednesday, a judge certified a lawsuit against the owners of Manson's Mill Bay Resort as a class-action case that covers anyone holding a membership in the RV campground.

About 80 people filled benches in the gallery and overflowed into the jury box of Chelan County Superior Court Judge John Bridges' courtroom. A few of the visitors wore shorts to court. Normally, they would have been barred from the proceedings, but Bridges suspended the dress code to accommodate them.

In their lawsuit against Chief Evans Inc., Mill Bay members are fighting for the right to continue using a parcel of Indian trust land on Lake Chelan's north shore. The members bought contracts that don't expire until the 2030s.

But Chief Evans claims the campground must close because it's insolvent and isn't the best use of lakefront real estate controlled and supervised by the federal government for the benefit of Native Americans.

Both sides in the lawsuit agreed that plaintiffs should be certified as a class so they can resolve their dispute as a group.

Bridges also heard and deferred action on a defendants' motion to dismiss claims based on the state's Camping Resort Act, and on a plaintiffs' motion to appoint a receiver to manage the campground and keep it running.

Chief Evans' attorney Bob Dodge of Wenatchee argued that members' claims aren't supported by their membership contracts and are pre-empted by federal law.

Plaintiffs' attorney Jim Danielson of Wenatchee criticized the defense strategy as "legal shenanigans" that should not be tolerated by the court.

The parties are scheduled to face off again in court on June 27. In the meantime, a temporary restraining order that prohibits Chief Evans from closing the campground and cutting off utilities remains in effect.

Laurie Smith can be reached at 664-7153 or by e-mail at smith@wenworld.com.

The Wenatchee World Online - <http://www.wenworld.com>
14 N Mission St., Wenatchee, WA 98801 * Phone: 509-663-5161, Fax: 509-662-5413

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