

## Chumash retain two big-named lawyers

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Staff Report

The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians announced Wednesday that it has retained the services of two high-profile attorneys — Roger Marzulla, former U.S. Assistant Attorney General for Environment, and Seth Waxman, former U.S. Solicitor General — to help the tribe in litigation over the annexation of 6.9 acres off Highway 246.

“I was elected by my fellow tribal members to represent our tribe,” Tribal Chairman Vincent Armenta said. “This means not being afraid to stand up for the tribe’s rights and not shrinking away from entering a legal battle with the extreme group in the community. We are fully prepared with a team that has the depth and experience to help us prevail.”

Last month, a panel of the U.S. Department of the Interior rejected an appeal by two valley citizen groups, Preservation of Los Olivos (POLO) and Preservation of Santa Ynez (POSY), who are trying to stop the tribe’s attempt to annex the land to its reservation. The tribe has announced plans to build a museum and cultural center, a retail facility and a public park on that land, which is across Highway 246 from its casino and hotel.

“By challenging our land annexation in the federal court, our tribal opponents have issued a direct challenge to the concept of sovereignty,” Armenta said. “The outcome of this conflict will have far-reaching implications throughout Indian country; therefore, it’s critical that we put tribal opponents on notice that they can’t bully tribes into backing away from our rights as sovereign nations.”

Marzulla, a founding partner in the Washington, D.C.-based law firm of Marzulla & Marzulla, specializes in environmental litigation, regulatory compliance, environmental crimes, natural resources law, and environmental policy and legislation, Armenta said.

Waxman’s practice spans both federal and state trial and appellate courts. He has delivered more than 45 oral arguments in the U.S. Supreme Court, according to Armenta.

In February, POLO and POSY announced they had retained former U.S. Solicitor General Theodore Olson to handle their legal challenge of the federal ruling.

“The tribe has a clear position of strength, since Congress long ago determined the framework for (Indian) trust land,” Armenta said. “We are not going to sit back and let a

group of individuals who have historically attacked the tribe continue to do so simply because they want to stop tribal progress.”