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Neversink Casino

Plans for a 330-acre casino beside a fabled Catskill river where Theodore Gordon cast his first dry flies generations ago have roiled New York fly fishers and conservation groups.

The Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians received state approvals in late 2010 for a 550,000-square-foot casino complex on the banks of the Neversink.

Critics fear the birthplace of American fly fishing will be doomed if construction of the gambling hub gains final federal approval and clears legal hurdles.

“The Neversink is the worst possible site. You couldn’t pick a worse place,” says Ramsay Adams, executive

director of the watchdog group Catskill Mountainkeeper. Polluted runoff from acres of asphalt parking lots, as well as wastewater discharges and spikes in highway traffic would kill the trout stream, he says. “For fly fishermen, it would be over.”

Phil Chase, a longtime Neversink angler and advocate, agrees. “A casino is going to raise water temperatures on one of best sections of the river that New York State owns,” says Chase, a board member of the conservation group Friends of the Upper Delaware River.

The Neversink Unique Area lies just downstream from the proposed site. It encompasses several thousand acres of public forest land along eight rugged miles of river accessible only by hiking trail for most of its length. Wild and holdover browns, brook trout, and rainbows thrive in the catch-and-release gorge, where difficult access helps keep out crowds.

“Everything about the casino is bad for the river,” laments Chase, who has fought to preserve the Neversink since the 1960s.

The tribe, which runs a similar casino in Wisconsin, says the sprawling development planned 100 miles north of Manhattan would add “4,900 full-time equivalent on-site jobs” and attract \$925.9 million per year to cash-strapped New York.

Those kinds of projections have led U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer and state officials to champion the casino for the economically struggling Catskills.

“This project will help put Sullivan County back on the map as a destination for visitors from New York City and around the country,” said a statement from Rep. Maurice Hinchey.

Photo | Rob Jagodzinski



▶ **A massive** casino complex threatens one of New York’s best trout streams, and a birthplace of American fly fishing.

Old Favorite Gets Better

Deep Water Cay’s 250 square miles of bonefish and permit flats were first discovered by Gil Drake and A.J. McClane in the 1950s and since then, a who’s who of the fly-fishing world has visited the archipelago of cays on the north-east end of Grand Bahama. In late 2009, a new ownership group acquired Deep Water Cay and has poured \$2.5 million in improvements into the resort.

In order of importance to fly fishers are the ten new Marquesa and Professional

Hell’s Bay skiffs that will join four newly refurbished Dolphin skiffs. The boats are powered by new Yamaha four-stroke outboards for a quiet, clean ride. The owners also purchased two new 33-foot World Cats for offshore and reef fishing.

The seven oceanfront cottages and two four-bed/four-bath homes have been completely renovated. The oceanfront homes have new wraparound verandas, and reappointed living rooms, dining rooms, and kitchens with new appliances.



Photo | Deep Water Cay

▶ **The new** Welcome Center (under construction in the above photograph) and a new floating dock (not shown) are the first things fly fishers will see at the newly renovated resort.

The Welcome Center, AJ’s Tiki Bar, and floating docks are the new face of Deep Water Cay’s waterfront. The old docks and pilings have been replaced

by floating docks, and the Welcome Center houses the full fly shop, complete with Sage rods and reels. For more information see deepwatercay.com.