

# CRIT members propose highway, river restrictions

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A group of Colorado River Indian Tribe members are asking the tribal council to approve an ordinance to remove non-tribal members from disputed territory on the California side of the Colorado River.

The proposed ordinance also calls for the closure of access to the area off Highway 95, patrol of the area with drones, the construction of security walls and restriction of access on significant parts of the Colorado River between Parker and Blythe, Calif.

In a petition attached to the proposed ordinance — provided by CRIT member Michael Tsosie — the group uses fiery language, calling for the removal of "illegal aliens" who the petition says think of the tribal members as nothing more than "'brown trash' that keeps getting in their way."

Moreover, the petition argues, CRIT members "find themselves under literal attack over our western boundary from many different non-Indian entities... whose sole purpose is to seek to dispossess the members of this tribe..."

Non-CRIT members live in an area south of Parker and north of Blythe that CRIT argues is legally part of its reservation. The residents and the state of California have disputed these tribal claims and don't recognize CRIT's jurisdiction over the land.

In October, California Attorney General Kamala Harris filed a brief in federal court supporting a resident's claim that he was unlawfully removed from his home. There has been a long dispute over the boundary of the CRIT reservation. CRIT officials say the dispute was resolved in the reservation's favor thanks to a 1969 order issued by the secretary of the interior.

The proposed "temporary but necessary measures" call for the removal of all nontribal members living in the disputed territory by June 1. The tribe would also close the territory to any further leasing of non-members until the land dispute was resolved to their satisfaction.

Furthermore, the resolution calls for shutting access off of California Highway 95 into the territory and considering removing the state's right-of-way through the territory for the highway itself. And it asks for the "entire river frontage on both banks" between Parker and Blythe to be closed to non-member "boating and other aquatic sport, fishing and enjoyment of the river..."

The tribe would reassign personnel to patrol the area and could "consider the use of drones" or construction of security walls to defend against "incursions by illegal aliens and land hungry squatters," under the proposal.

The proposal calls for the tribal members to begin settling in the disputed area after Feb. 1 to establish a stronger tribal presence. It even asks the tribal council to provide incentives and "make every effort to facilitate the settlement of the western boundary area by responsible tribal members."

In an email, Tsosie said the petition was drafted by a "coalition of tribal interests," including "input from tribal members in all three voting districts." He said the petition had been sent to the council chairman and would hopefully be brought forward for council action by the end of the week.

Attempts to reach CRIT officials weren't immediately returned.

Reporter Joan M. Travis contributed to this story.