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Casinos report Aug. revenue uptick

But Northwest Indiana sites see decrease through November

By Alexandra Kukulka
Post-Tribune

The Northwest Indiana casinos had a rough three months with revenue declines reported in September, October and November. In August, the three casinos reported an increase in revenues year over year.

In August, the three casinos saw an increase in revenue from \$73.8 million in 2024 to \$77.2 million

in 2025, largely because of a \$7 million increase in revenue, year over year, at the Horseshoe casino.

In September, the three casinos reported revenues of \$63.1 million, a decrease from \$69 million in September 2024. In October, the three casinos reported revenues of \$67.3 million, a decrease from \$73.4 million in October 2024, according to the Indiana Gaming Commission's monthly gaming reports.

In November, the three casinos

reported \$65.5 million in revenues, a decrease from \$72.3 million in November 2024, according to the reports.

Matt Schuffert, president of Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana, said he could only discuss the November report. November was "a tough month, primarily because of weather," Schuffert said.

The Chicagoland area was impacted by a lake-effect snowstorm in early November and then

a snowy Thanksgiving holiday weekend, Schuffert said. Typically, the Thanksgiving weekend is a strong revenue day, Schuffert said, but this year's weather impacted the numbers.

"The entire Northwest Indiana market was down, year over year, in November. Certainly, weather played a huge reason why," Schuffert said.

But Hard Rock still led the state in overall gaming revenue in November, Schuffert said.



Hard Rock Casino Northern Indiana reported a tough month in November. **KYLE TELECHA/FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE 2022**

Turn to Casinos, Page 2



A worker defoliates cannabis plants in a greenhouse and flowering room on Aug. 15 at the Curaleaf cannabis growing facility in Litchfield. **DOMINIC DI PALERMO/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Federal change on pot may aid Illinois industry

Classification restrictions relaxed; effects on consumers may take some time to see

By Robert McCoppin
Chicago Tribune

A renewed federal push to relax restrictions on marijuana likely will mean bigger profits for cannabis companies and more research into the effects of the plant, industry participants say. It may eventually ease high prices slightly, but otherwise isn't expected to make an immediate difference for consumers in Illinois.

That's because weed already is legal under Illinois state law. The new proposed federal classification would allow doctors to prescribe FDA-approved cannabis products, rather than just recommending it, and research eventually could result in better understanding of the plant's effects and proper use.

President Donald Trump's executive order Dec. 18 did not legalize cannabis, but directed the attorney general to change its classification as a controlled substance from the most serious designation of Schedule I, on par with heroin and LSD, to Schedule III, the same class as codeine, ketamine and steroids.

The change was put in motion when President Joe Biden's administration proposed rescheduling in 2022, but the process was bogged down before the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. It's uncertain how much longer the lengthy process will take.

The main immediate effect would be that cannabis businesses for the first time will be able to take normal business tax deductions for expenses. That

could cut in half tax rates that now reach 70% to 80%, said cannabis attorney Scott Redman, president of the Illinois Independent Craft Growers Association.

"The tax part is huge," Redman said. "Just imagine your own tax returns if you had no deductions. It makes the business more viable. That can only help businesses get investments. So it's going to be a big deal for those operating and those still trying to get up and running."

The Cannabis Business Association of Illinois, which represents most of the licensed industry in the state, previously issued its position on reclassification, stating, "This is an important step in the right direction for the cannabis industry and our society at large, and we hope this continues

to pave the path toward federal legalization."

Recreational use of cannabis remains illegal under federal law, which still largely prevents federally licensed banks from giving loans to pot businesses. Twenty-three states have ignored the federal prohibition and legalized recreational use, while 42 states have authorized some form of medical cannabis.

Trump said he had people "begging" him to reclassify pot to make it more available for pain relief and other uses.

While Congress recently acted to ban intoxicating hemp products effective in late 2026, the presidential order directs staff to work with lawmakers to allow access

Turn to Pot, Page 2

Save the Dunes hands out honors

Former parks director, student group awarded

By Maya Wilkins
Post-Tribune

As he wraps up a long career with the National Park Service, Chris Pergiel called recognition from a local organization "a great honor."

"I especially think it means something to me this year," said Pergiel, former deputy superintendent at the Indiana Dunes National Park. "The timing was good, and I think the relationship between the organization, Save the Dunes, and the Indiana Dunes National Park is as good and as productive as it's ever been."

Pergiel received the Paul H. Douglas Memorial Award from Save the Dunes, a Michigan City-based organization dedicated to preserving and advocating for the park. The Paul H. Douglas award is the organization's highest honor, according to Save the Dunes, and is given to someone who is recognized for their work preserving and protecting the Indiana Dunes.

Pergiel worked for the National Park Service for more than 40 years, and he held various positions within the department, including law enforcement ranger, chief ranger and deputy superintendent. He worked in parks nationwide, including in Arizona, Alaska, California and Indiana.

His experience with the Indiana Dunes National Park was "eye-opening," Pergiel said, and it allowed him to work closely with local partners, including Save the Dunes.

"In many of the other national parks, everything's focused internally, and we work with the surrounding communities, but not as directly," Pergiel said. "In Indiana Dunes National Park, it's all about partnerships."

The national park relies on local

Turn to Dunes, Page 2

Fire departments building for present and future demands



The steel structure frame for the new Liberty Township fire station is now in place. **JIM WOODS/FOR POST-TRIBUNE**

Liberty Township, Chesterton working on their fire stations

By Jim Woods
Post-Tribune

The Duneland communities of Chesterton and Liberty Township are investing millions of dollars to expand and update their fire stations in response to the area's population growth.

Liberty Township in October began building its new \$4.5 million fire station, which will also house the township's government office.

The new 15,200-square-foot structure is being built behind the

current 4,000-square-foot fire station on County Road W 900 N.

One of the important features of the new station is a much larger garage bay area, which would better accommodate up to eight fire vehicles.

Liberty Township's current firehouse, built in 1955, can only accommodate six vehicles with little room to spare. Nicholas Wineland, who is president of the Liberty Township Volunteer Fire Department corporation, said the present building underwent two expansions and is maze-like.

Fire trucks were smaller back in the 1950s, so the garage doors are only 10 feet high.

"Every fire truck had to be special-ordered so it could fit inside

the fire station," said Liberty Township Trustee Matt Keiser.

Wineland said he hopes another benefit from the new construction will be to bring more volunteers into the department.

Sandwiched between the growing communities of Valparaiso and Chesterton, Liberty Township also wants to be positioned for the future. It's why the structure allows for room to grow, Keiser said.

"We know at some point our fire department, that is now 100% volunteer, will transition to full-time to be able to service the township," Keiser said.

Liberty Township's population has doubled since 1980, as the 2020

Turn to Fire, Page 2