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**Federal Government Pledges Rapid Review of Mashpee
Wampanoag Tribe's Application for Land in Trust
*BIA Directed to Process Land Application as Tribe's Initial Reservation***

MASHPEE, MA – Federal officials have informed the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe that their land in trust application is proceeding rapidly according to a recent letter from Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior for Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn.

Tribal Chairman Cedric Cromwell praised the Department of Interior's decision to process the Tribe's application under the initial reservation exception. "This is another critical step forward for our proposed destination resort casino, which will create thousands of jobs and widespread economic opportunities for the people of southeastern Massachusetts."

The December 31st letter to Cedric Cromwell was sent to update the Tribe on the status of its application for land in Mashpee and Taunton to be placed in trust. The Washburn letter states that Interior has completed an initial review and is moving forward in processing the application according to the initial reservation exception.

Assistant Secretary Washburn writes, “After an initial review of the Tribe’s application and other applicable documents in the record, we will be directing the Eastern Regional Director to begin processing the Tribe’s application pursuant to this [initial reservation] exception. The Office of Indian Gaming will complete its final analysis of the applicability of the initial reservation exception in January 2013.” Washburn also stated the BIA expects to complete in early 2013 its analysis of the Secretary’s authority to acquire land in trust for the Tribe in light of the Supreme Court’s 2009 *Carciere v. Salazar* decision.

Chairman Cromwell applauded the BIA and the Obama Administration's strong support for a speedy review process. "The schedule outlined by Assistant Secretary Washburn means that our land in trust application is a priority. We appreciate this very strong commitment from the Obama Administration and the active support of Governor Patrick and our congressional delegation."

Chairman Cromwell also stated that land in trust isn't just about gaming. "We're even more excited about what finally having a reservation will mean for our tribe," Cromwell explained. "A reservation is absolutely critical to our ability to operate as a tribal government, to provide services to our people like housing, health care and education, and to maintain our history and culture in our ancestral homeland."

The initial reservation exception is found in Section 20 of the [Indian Regulatory Gaming Act](#). It is one of the few exceptions to a prohibition on gaming on lands taken into trust after October 17, 1988, and is expressly intended for newly recognized Indian tribes, such as the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, that do not have a reservation.

The Tribe's application for land in trust as an initial reservation includes land in Mashpee and Taunton, Massachusetts. The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe has proposed a destination resort casino in Taunton. The planning process for the proposed casino has moved at a brisk pace. The Tribe has successfully acquired an option for land, negotiated an intergovernmental agreement with the City, won the support of the residents of Taunton in a referendum, and has progressed with state and federal environmental reviews.

The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, with approximately 2,600 enrolled members, has called present-day southeastern Massachusetts home for over 12,000 years. The Tribe was acknowledged in 2007 as a federally recognized tribe. As a sovereign nation, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe works to provide housing, health care, education, cultural, and economic development services to its members.

See Washburn letter below.

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United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

DEC 31 2012

The Honorable Cedric Cromwell
Chairman, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe
483 Great Neck Road South
Mashpee, MA 02649

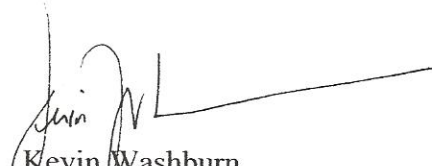
Dear Chairman Cromwell:

This letter is to update you on the status of the Mashpee Wampanoag's application and request for a Secretarial determination of the Tribe's eligibility to game pursuant to the "initial reservation" exception found in Section 20 of Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), 25 U.S.C. § 2719(b)(1)(B)(ii). After an initial review of the Tribe's application and other applicable documents in the record, we will be directing the Eastern Regional Director to begin processing the Tribe's application pursuant to this exception. The Office of Indian Gaming will complete its final analysis of the applicability of the initial reservation exception in January 2013.

Additionally, we continue to review the record to develop our determination of the Secretary's authority to acquire land for the Tribe pursuant to Section 5 of the Indian Reorganization Act, 25 U.S.C. § 465. We intend to finalize our analysis also in early 2013.

Please contact the Office of Indian Gaming at (202) 219-4066 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Kevin Washburn
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs