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Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Announces Key Federal Decision on Project First Light Casino

Land in Trust DEIS Approved for Release by Interior Department - Tribe's Land Application Advances

(TAUNTON, MA – October 23, 2013) -- The [Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe](#) announced today that the U.S. Department of Interior has approved the publication of the federal Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Tribe's land-in-trust application, which includes the proposed [Project First Light](#) destination resort casino in Taunton. The Interior Department's Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn advised Tribal Chairman Cedric Cromwell of the approval of the DEIS this morning.

"The Interior Department's approval of the DEIS represents a key milestone in the acquisition of land for our tribe," said Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Chairman Cedric Cromwell. "It is also a key step forward for our *Project First Light* Destination Resort and Casino in Taunton, which is expected to bring thousands of jobs to southeastern Massachusetts."

The federal government's release of the DEIS is a critical step in the federal government's review and processing of land applications for native tribes. Following the approval of the DEIS and its public release, the report can now be published in the federal register. The federal register notice will include information on how citizens can obtain copies of the report, details on the public comment period and the upcoming public hearings that will be held later this fall.

The preparation of the DEIS is the most time-consuming phase of the federal tribe land acquisition process. The report includes a complete and comprehensive analysis of the proposed land uses identified in the Tribe's land-in-trust application. It examines the anticipated uses of the property, their impacts and the proposed mitigation measures under consideration, including a specific assessment of the impacts associated with the proposed destination resort casino in Taunton.

The DEIS is similar to the DEIR, which the Tribe released last spring. However, the DEIR is a state process, and its content focuses on the proposed casino. The DEIS is a federal review process that examines the uses and environmental impacts associated with all the land identified in the Tribe's land-in-trust application, including other parcels in the town of Mashpee. Once the DEIS comment

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period ends, the Interior Department will analyze the comments, then issue a Final EIS, followed by a Record of Decision (ROD) authorizing the land to be acquired and placed in trust.

The Mashpee Wampanoag, a federally-recognized Indian tribe that has historically resided in southeastern Massachusetts, is proposing to build a casino, hotels, restaurants, shops, a family water park and an events center on a 151-acre site in Taunton. *Project First Light* will be built on lands taken into trust by the federal Department of the Interior.

The construction phase of the project is expected to generate over 1,000 jobs and approximately \$837 million in total economic activity in Massachusetts. Once completed, the resort's operation is expected to generate more than 3,500 full- and part-time jobs as well as nearly \$512 million in economic activity each year.

The Mashpee Wampanoag are known as the "People of the First Light," hence the project's name. The Tribe has a strong and long tradition of natural resource conservation, which is also reflected in the project planning. Since the environmental review process began, the Tribe has continued to refine the project's design to avoid and minimize various impacts to the city.

For example, on-site impacts to wetlands and other water resources have been minimized as a large majority of the development will be constructed on areas that have already been disturbed. Development will also make adaptive reuse of two existing buildings on-site.

The Tribe has also worked with city of Taunton and state officials on an ongoing basis to improve traffic flow in the area, including improvements to the Route 24/140 interchange. These were the subject of public forums with both the Taunton City Council and the city's Mayor last month.

Details on how the public can review the federal Draft DEIS will be announced soon.

About the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe:

The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, also known as the People of the First Light, has inhabited present-day Massachusetts for more than 12,000 years. After an arduous process lasting more than three decades, the Mashpee Wampanoag were re-acknowledged as a federally recognized tribe in 2007 and retain full tribal sovereignty rights. The Mashpee tribe currently has approximately 2,600 enrolled citizens.

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