



Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe
483 Great Neck Rd. South, Mashpee, MA 02649
Phone (508) 477-0208 Fax (508) 477-1218

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Paula Gates, Regan Communications
617-488-2853 (w) 617-869-4052 (c)
pgates@regancomm.com

Mashpee Tribe Announces Release of the Federal Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Federal Land In Trust Application

DEIS Public Hearings Scheduled - December 2nd 2013 at Mashpee High School auditorium at 5:30 p.m. and December 3rd 2013 at Taunton High School auditorium at 5:30 p.m.

(TAUNTON, MA – November 20, 2013) -- The [Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe](#) announced today the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Tribe's land-in-trust application, for the proposed [Project First Light](#) destination resort casino in Taunton and Tribal government facilities in Mashpee.

The DEIS is available for review at the Taunton Public Library, 12 Pleasant Street, Taunton, Massachusetts; the Mashpee Public Library, 64 Steeple Street, Mashpee, Massachusetts; the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Headquarters at 483 Great Neck Road South, Mashpee, Massachusetts; and temporary Tribal Council offices located at 766 Falmouth Road, Mashpee, Massachusetts. The DEIS is also available online at: <http://www.mwteis.com>.

The report, released by the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs, will be the subject of two public hearings. They will be held on Monday, December 2nd at Mashpee High School, and Tuesday, December 3rd at Taunton High School. Both hearings begin at 5:30 pm. An official notice of the availability of the DEIS was placed in the Federal Register last Friday.

The DEIS is similar to the State DEIR, which the Tribe prepared and released last spring. The DEIR is part of a comprehensive public review coordinated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and its content focuses primarily on the proposed casino. The DEIS, however, is managed by the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs that examines the environmental impacts associated with the Tribe's planned activities on land identified in the Tribe's land-in-trust application, including other parcels in the town of Mashpee. Once the DEIS comment period ends, the Interior Department will analyze the comments, and prepare a Final EIS. Once a final EIS is released, the Department issues a Record of Decision (ROD) authorizing title to the land to be placed in trust.

The DEIS is the most time-consuming phase of the Indian trust land acquisition process. The document 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 significant impacts and any proposed mitigation measures under consideration. It also welcomes public comments on impacts and proposed mitigation measures.

more

Public review of the DEIS is part of the administrative process for the evaluation of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe's application under section 5 of Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) ([25 U.S.C. 461](#), et. seq). Under Council on Environmental Quality National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations ([40 CFR 1506.10](#)), the publication of the Notice of Availability by the Environmental Protection Agency in the Federal Register initiates the 45-day public comment period.

Environmental issues that are addressed in the DEIS include: Transportation; wetlands and other waters of the U.S.; storm water; geology and soils; rare species and wildlife habitat; hazardous materials; water supply; wastewater; utilities; solid waste; air quality; greenhouse gas; cultural resources; noise, visual impacts; socio-economics; environmental justice; cumulative effects and indirect and growth-inducing effects.

Written comments on the DEIS must arrive within 45 days after the Environmental Protection Agency publishes its Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. Comments can be mailed to: Mr. Franklin Keel, Eastern Regional Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Eastern Region, 545 Marriott Drive, Suite 700, Nashville, Tennessee 37214.

Historically known as the "People of the First Light," the Mashpee Wampanoag were inspired to dub their casino development *Project First Light*. 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 gaming site and city.

The Tribe has also worked with city of Taunton and state officials on an ongoing basis to find ways 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 earlier this year.

Project First Light will include 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.

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.

###