



Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe
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MASHPEE WAMPANOAG WORK TOWARD DECISION ON TRIBE'S LAND STATUS

MASHPEE, Ma. (April 28, 2017) – The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe announced today that it hopes to fully remobilize construction crews in Taunton, Massachusetts this summer for its \$1 billion First Light Resort & Casino project and have doors open by summer 2018.

The Tribe's announcement comes on the heels of information from the U.S. Interior Department that it will issue a new decision on the historic Tribe's land status on or before June 19, 2017.

"We are confident that an amended ROD (Record-Of-Decision) from the Interior Department will reaffirm what has already been well-established and documented: we have lived on this land for thousands of years and it is only right that we remain," Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Council Chairman Cedric Cromwell said.

"We are ready to deliver over 7000 jobs, tens of millions of dollars in critical traffic infrastructure improvements, and hundreds of millions of dollars towards urban renewal in a region of Massachusetts that so desperately needs it," Chairman Cromwell said.

The initial ROD that re-established reservation land for the Mashpee tribe was issued by DOI in September 2015 under what is known as "Category 2" of the Indian Reorganization Act -- living continuously on an existing reservation. Shortly after that decision, a group of anti-Indian activists with out-of-state funders in East Taunton filed a suit challenging the DOI's authority to take land in trust under Category 2.

Although federal district court Judge William Young initially ruled against Category 2 as an independent basis to take land into trust, the judge later ruled that the DOI could revise the initial ROD to include Category 1, which establishes that the Tribe was under federal jurisdiction before 1934, the year the Indian Reorganization Act was enacted.

Earlier this month the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear any further appeals on the legality of DOI's issuance of a Category 1 ROD for the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, essentially securing the legal basis for Mashpee's own Category 1 eligibility.

"The firm date provided by the Department of Interior puts any false claims about further delays to rest. We recognize that the Interior has a rigorous review process, but the June date at least gives us

certainty there will be a decision very soon, and we are confident that our undeniable historical legacy will support a favorable outcome,” Chairman Cromwell said.

“Now that we have a firm commitment from the Interior Department that a decision is imminent we can focus on preparing to resume work at the site this summer, and putting the frivolous lawsuit filed against the Interior Department last year behind us,” Cromwell said.

“It’s unfortunate that a small group of anti-Indian activists and out-of-state dollars have created a legal side show in an attempt to ignore the wishes of Taunton’s leaders and residents, and to deprive us of our sovereign right to sustain our culture and government, and to develop First Light Resort & Casino as a means of economic uplift for our people and the City of Taunton,” Cromwell added.

“We’ve been challenged every step of the way, and each step we have prevailed. We look forward to prevailing yet again in June,” he said.

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About the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe:

The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, also known as the People of the First Light, has inhabited present day Massachusetts and Eastern Rhode Island 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. In 2015, the federal government declared 150 acres of land in Mashpee and 170 acres of land in Taunton as the Tribe’s initial reservation, on which the Tribe can exercise its full tribal sovereignty rights. The Mashpee tribe currently has approximately 2,600 enrolled citizens.

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