



STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II
LT. GOVERNOR

June 15, 2022

The Honorable Debra Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
United States Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

On December 16, 2020, I received a letter from the Department of the Interior (DOI), transmitting an affirmative two-part determination pursuant to 25 U.S.C. § 2719(b)(1)(A) with respect to a 2015 application from the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians requesting that DOI acquire in trust around 60 acres of land in Fruitport Township, Michigan for gaming and other purposes. DOI's letter requested my concurrence in that determination, a necessary step for the Little River Band to move forward with their proposed off-reservation casino. Subsequently, on December 16, 2021, DOI notified me that I was granted an extension of 180 days, giving me until June 16, 2022 to respond.

In the meantime, DOI has been considering whether to extend federal acknowledgment to the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians and has not yet issued a proposed finding. Should the Grand River Bands obtain federal recognition, they may wish to open a gaming facility of their own in the same general area as the Little River Band's proposed project. As you know, I requested that DOI issue its proposed finding on the potential Grand River Bands' acknowledgment by June 1, 2022 or extend the June 16, 2022 deadline for my decision with respect to the Little River Band's two-part determination. DOI has done neither.

This has placed me in an impossible position. Despite my best efforts to get answers from DOI with respect to the pending Grand River Bands' acknowledgment petition, I am left without information critical to my decision on the Little River Band's two-part determination. The Little River Band has invested a significant amount of time and money into its proposal, followed the process prescribed by law and regulation, and secured the support of many stakeholders. Despite the strength of its proposal, however, I am unable to concur in the Little River Band's two-part determination because of the remaining uncertainty created by the Grand River Bands' pending acknowledgment petition.

Once DOI has acted on the Grand River Bands' acknowledgment petition, I would welcome the opportunity to revisit this question and ask that you to find a way for me to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gretchen Whitmer".

Gretchen Whitmer