



STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II
LT. GOVERNOR

May 23, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Haaland:

In December 2020, I received a letter from your Department (DOI) requesting concurrence with an affirmative two-part determination for the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians to conduct gaming on approximately 60 acres of land in Fruitport Township (Muskegon County), Michigan. The deadline for my decision on that concurrence is now set for June 16, 2022.

This timeline is not of my choosing. The Trump Administration forced this deadline by issuing the two-part determination in the final weeks before President Trump left office. The impending deadline is particularly unworkable because DOI is still considering whether to acknowledge the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians.

My concurrence with the Little River Band's two-part determination could frustrate the Grand River Bands, which may wish to open their own gaming facility on tribal lands not far from Fruitport Township. Yet DOI has not provided any information on how likely it is that the Grand River Bands will be acknowledged. DOI is currently scheduled to issue a proposed finding on or before October 12, 2022—four months too late to enable an informed decision about whether to concur with the Little River Band's two-part determination.

This is a problem of DOI's making, and it is a problem that DOI must solve. DOI should issue a proposed finding on whether to acknowledge the Grand River Bands no later than June 1, 2022, so that I can take it into account in deciding on the Little River Band's two-part determination. If this is not possible, DOI must extend the June 16 deadline until after DOI has issued a preliminary decision on the Grand River Bands.

As we discussed when we last spoke, I am acutely aware of the importance of this decision to the Tribe, to the local community, to State-Tribal relations, and to the State of Michigan. Given this, it is critical that we have this information available to enable us to properly weigh the various considerations and accurately assess the impact and consequences of this decision.

I look forward to hearing from you on this request soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gretchen Whitmer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Gretchen Whitmer