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**Interior Department Says Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe's
Land will Qualify as an Initial Reservation**
Land application demonstrates significant historic ties to Taunton area

MASHPEE, MA – The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe has received a positive preliminary advisory opinion from the Department of the Interior indicating that the Tribe's lands in Taunton and Mashpee qualify as an initial reservation once the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe's land into trust process is completed with a positive Record of Decision. This special status means that the Tribe will be able to conduct Class II and Class III gaming on the land under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

Chairman Cedric Cromwell said this news "is another huge step forward toward the development of a first class destination resort casino in Taunton. We look forward to creating thousands of jobs and widespread economic opportunities for our Tribe, the people of Taunton and the entire southeastern Massachusetts region."

The news was presented to Chairman Cromwell in a letter from Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior for Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn. He informed the tribe that an analysis completed by the Office of Indian Gaming finds that the Tribe's land in trust application qualifies to be processed under the initial reservation exception.

The initial reservation exception is found in Section 20 of the [Indian Regulatory Gaming Act](#). It is one of the few exceptions to the prohibition of gaming on lands taken into trust after October 17, 1988. The provision is expressly intended for newly recognized Indian tribes, such as the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, that do not have an established reservation. The determination is based, in part, on an analysis of the tribe's historic ties to the area identified in the land in trust application that is currently under review by the federal government.

Chairman Cromwell praised the speedy review process. "On behalf of our tribe, I want to express my deepest gratitude to President Obama, Secretary Washburn, the Interior Department, and the many dedicated officials at the Bureau of Indian Affairs. They truly understand how important it is for our people to have land, to maintain our history, our language and our culture. This will enable us to fully

operate as a sovereign Tribal government, to secure the resources necessary to support ourselves, and to provide services such as housing, health care and education to our people.”

In addition, Chairman Cromwell thanked those who have worked on the documentation of the Tribe’s historic ties. “Tribal members and our advisers worked tirelessly to document our historic ties to Mashpee, Taunton, and all our ancestral homeland encompassing present-day Southeastern Massachusetts and Eastern Rhode Island. Their efforts were conducted with professionalism, seriousness, and respect for our rich history.”

The Tribe’s application for land in trust includes land in Mashpee and Taunton, Massachusetts. The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe has proposed a destination resort casino in Taunton. The planning and design process for the proposed casino has moved at a very brisk pace. The Tribe has successfully acquired an option for land, negotiated an intergovernmental agreement with the City, won the support of the residents of Taunton in a referendum, and has progressed with state and federal environmental reviews.

The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, with approximately 2,600 enrolled members, has called present-day southeastern Massachusetts home for over 12,000 years. The Tribe was acknowledged in 2007 as a federally recognized tribe. As a sovereign nation, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe works to provide housing, health care, education, cultural, and economic development services to its members throughout the region.