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Bureau of Indian Affairs Issues Draft EIS

Little River Band of Ottawa Indians' Muskegon Co. Gaming Project Moves Forward with Federal Land-Into-Trust Process

Washington D.C. — A Muskegon County casino proposed by the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians moved another step forward. The U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) today published the Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in the Federal Register as the next step in the environmental review to place land in trust for gaming purposes of the tribe.

The BIA announced a public hearing on the DEIS will be held December 12th at 6 p.m. at Fruitport Middle School auditorium, located at 3113 E. Pontaluna Road.

"This is a long awaited big step for the Little River Band and the Muskegon community to bring economic development to the region as the opportunity to comment on the DEIS is an important public part of the review process," said Tribal Ogema Larry Romanelli. "We strongly encourage the community to join us at the public hearing to express their opinions that this project will have a positive impact on Muskegon. Community feedback is important to the Bureau of Indian Affairs' ability to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the project."

Community input will be taken place at the public hearing, where members of the public can comment on the Draft EIS published by the BIA. The BIA will then take that community input into account as it prepares a final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in response to the Tribes' application to put land into federal trust for development of the proposed Muskegon casino. The BIA will also accept written comments. Written comments must be sent to the BIA before January 7, 2019. The DEIS, and an explanation of the review process is available at www.littlerivereis.com

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The EIS will take a hard look at the potential environmental impacts of the project, including land use, geology and soils, water resources, agricultural resources, biological resources, cultural resources, traffic, air quality, noise, public health/environmental hazards, hazardous material and waste, public services, and socio-economics.

The Little River Band filed an application February 2015 requesting the BIA to place 60 acres of land in trust for a $180 million casino and economic development project at the former Great Lakes Downs racetrack site in Fruitport Township. The project is expected to create more than 1,200 new jobs in Muskegon County. The BIA held a scoping hearing in October 2015 when it published a Notice of Intent to kick off the public part of the review process.

Muskegon County is the home to the Little River Band's largest population base. Muskegon is one of the Tribe's service areas and the Tribe maintains governmental offices in Muskegon to serve its members.

"The opening of a casino in Fruitport Township will enable the Tribe to provide housing, health care, education and other services to our elders and youth, particularly those based in Muskegon County, while providing more than 1,175 jobs and a positive economic impact for the local community" said Tribal Council Speaker Joseph Riley II. "The publishing of the Draft EIS is usually the longest step in the approval process so we couldn't be more pleased that the BIA is moving the process forward."

The Little River Band's proposed gaming and economic development project would include:

- Approximately 69,000 square feet of gaming floor space
- 1,700 slot machines
- 35 table games
- 220-room hotel
- Conference and meeting room space
- Dining and entertainment options

The proposed casino has received wide support from the community including support from Fruitport Township, Fruitport Community Schools, Muskegon County, West Michigan trade unions, local businesses. Both Fruitport Township and Muskegon County reaffirmed support for the Tribe's Muskegon casino project with resolutions of support.

The Little River Band has signed a Municipal Services Agreement with Muskegon County and Fruitport Township that consists of the Tribe making payments for public safety, sanitary sewer, public water construction and other services.

The BIA published the notice of the DEIS hearing in a local newspaper and online at http://www.littlerivereis.com

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Timeline

LRBOI purchased former Great Lakes Downs racetrack	2008
LRBOI filed application	2.2015
Notice of Intent Scoping Hearing	10.2015
Scoping Hearing Report	2,2016
Draft EIS Published	11.23.18
Public hearing on DEIS	12.12.18
BIA Deadline for Written comments	1.7.19