NEWS

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BIA Approves Extension of Comment Period for Oneida Indian Nation Land-Into-Trust Application

WASHINGTON – Associate Deputy Secretary James E. Cason announced today that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Eastern Regional Office in Nashville, Tenn., has approved under 25 CFR 151 a request by local officials of Madison County and Oneida County in the state of New York to extend the comment period for state and local governments on a land-into-trust application from the Oneida Indian Nation. The Bureau granted a 60-day extension of time to submit comments on the tribe's application which is comprised of three groups of land parcels.

After the BIA had received the Oneida Indian Nation's request on September 20, 2005, and in accordance with 25 CFR 151.10, the Eastern Regional Office provided notification to state and local governments having regulatory jurisdiction over the land of their opportunity to provide written comments within a 30-day timeframe as to the acquisition's potential impact on their regulatory jurisdiction, real property taxes and special assessments.

The original comment periods on Group 1 and Group 2 lands ran from September 26 to October 26, 2005, and from November 1 to November 30, 2005, respectively. The BIA notice further specified that an extension of 10 to 30 days in which to submit comments may be granted provided written justification was received within the initial comment period.

The BIA has granted Madison County and Oneida County officials a 60-day extension of time to submit comments on the acquisition of Group 1 and Group 2 lands until the close of business on December 27, 2005, and January 29, 2006, respectively. The BIA also will soon provide formal notice of the extension of the comment period for Group 3 lands from November 1 until the close of business on March 1, 2006.

On April 5, 2005, the Oneida Indian Nation submitted to the BIA Eastern Regional Office their request for the fee-to-trust transfer of restricted lands within the Oneida Reservation totaling 17,193 acres in the two counties. The request was the result of the March 29, 2005, United States Supreme Court decision in *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation* wherein the Court noted that the tribe had an available procedure under 25 USC 465 and 25 CFR 151 for acquiring land into trust that takes into account local jurisdictional concerns.

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