Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

**Media Contact:** NewsMedia@bia.gov
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**WASHINGTON** – This week, Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney issued two separate decisions taking lands into trust for the Cahto Tribe of the Laytonville Rancheria and the Catawba Indian Nation. These historic decisions, and the records supporting them, benefited from recently released guidance establishing a clear, four-step process for analyzing trust acquisitions under the U.S. Supreme Court's 2009 decision in *Carcieri v. United States*.

"These decisions empower the Cahto Tribe and the Catawba Nation to pursue economic development opportunities for the benefit of their tribal members and communities. I am proud to support their efforts," **said Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney**.

The guidance follows the Solicitor of the Interior's withdrawal of M-37029 and the issuance of the new guidance for determining eligibility. The guidance conveys to Department employees and tribes what evidence is necessary to determine whether particular tribal applicants satisfy the first definition of "Indian" as set forth in Section 19 of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.

"The Solicitor's Guidance reflects the Department's experience and expertise gained through processing fee-to-trust applications," **said Deputy Solicitor for Indian Affairs Kyle Scherer**. "In addition to making the process more transparent, we anticipate the Solicitor's Guidance will decrease costs and review times for each application."

The land taken into trust for the Cahto Tribe is located one mile east of the historic Laytonville Rancheria and within the boundaries of the Tribe's traditional land base in California. The acquisition will enable the Tribe to better protect sites of cultural and historic significance.

"It has been a long process for the Tribe," said **Cahto Tribe Chairwoman Mary Norris**. "We are grateful that we can continue toward tribal self-sufficiency. Restoring our land is a priority for the Cahto Tribe."

The land taken into trust for the Catawba Nation will be utilized to develop a casino and mixed-use entertainment complex under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. The property is in Kings Mountain, North Carolina. The benefits of the proposed facility will enable the Nation to expand its services and economic opportunities for its members, as well as benefiting the surrounding community.

"In my lifetime, the Catawba Nation has gone from full recognition, to termination, to restoration through an Act of Congress," **said Catawba Nation Chief William Harris**. "Today, through Secretary David Bernhardt's leadership, the Department of the Interior has acted to fully protect our sovereign and economic rights. For this, we are deeply grateful. The Nation is very thankful for the Department's decision to take this land into trust, enabling us to achieve the promise of self-determination trough economic development. The Department has a very rigorous process for reviewing trust land acquisitions. We also appreciate the hard work of the Department's solicitors and Bureau staff on our application, whose careful review of our history, including our historic land settlement, ensured that this decision is consistent with the Supreme Court's *Carcieri* decision."

The Solicitor's Guidance went into effect immediately following issuance and will be used to review all fee-to-trust processes moving forward.

*The **Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs** advises the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs policy issues, communicates policy to and oversees the programs of the BIA and the BIE, provides leadership in consultations with tribes, and serves as the DOI official for intra- and inter-departmental coordination and liaison within the Executive Branch on Indian matters.*

*The **Bureau of Indian Affairs**' mission includes developing and protecting Indian trust lands and natural and energy resources; supporting social welfare, public safety and justice in tribal communities; and promoting tribal self-determination and self-governance.*

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