Tribal Consultations and Public Meetings will Begin in July and August

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WASHINGTON – As part of President Obama's commitment to strengthen the nation-to-nation relationship with Native Americans and Alaska Natives, Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Kevin K. Washburn today announced the availability of a discussion draft of potential changes to the Department of the Interior's Part 83 process for acknowledging certain Indian groups as federally recognized tribes. The discussion draft is intended to provide tribes and the public an early opportunity to provide input on potential changes to the Part 83 process.

The Federal recognition acknowledgment process is the Department's regulatory process by which petitioning groups that meet the regulatory criteria are "acknowledged" as federally recognized Indian tribes with a government-to-government relationship with the United States. There are currently 566 federally recognized tribes in the U.S.

"The discussion draft is a starting point in the conversation with federally recognized tribes, petitioners and the public on how to ensure that the process is fair, efficient and transparent," Washburn said. "We are starting with an open mind and no fixed agenda, and we're looking forward to getting input from all stakeholders before we move forward with a proposed rule that will provide additional certainty and timeliness to the process. In many parts of the discussion draft, we have made no fixed recommendations in order to have the benefit of that input in formulating a proposed rule."

The discussion draft maintains stringent standards for core criteria and seeks comment on objective criteria to be incorporated into the standards. The draft suggests changes to improve timeliness and efficiency by providing for a thorough review of a petitioner's community and political authority. That review would begin with the year 1934 to align with the United States repudiation of allotment and assimilation policies and eliminate the requirement that an external entity identify the group as Indian since 1900.

The discussion draft further suggests providing flexibility to the Department to issue expedited denials and approvals based on the particular facts and unique history of certain petitioners. The draft suggests streamlining the process to promote greater transparency as a petitioner's materials are evaluated by the Office of Federal Acknowledgment and the Department. The Department is making the discussion draft available for review at http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/Consultation/index.htm. This discussion draft is a precursor to proposed regulatory changes, but is not itself a proposed rule. The Department will accept written comments on the draft until August 16, 2013. In addition to written comments, the Department will hold tribal consultations and public meetings at the following locations:

	Tribal Consultation	Public Meeting		
July 23, 2013	9 a.m.– 12 p.m.	1 p.m.– 4 p.m	Canyonville, Oregon	Seven Feathers Casino Resort 146 Chief Miwaleta Lane Canyonville, OR 97417 (541) 839-1111
July 25, 2013	9 a.m.– 12 p.m.	1 p.m.– 4 p.m.	Solvang, California	Hotel Corque 400 Alisal Road Solvang, CA 93463 (800) 624-5572
July 29, 2013	9 a.m.– 12 p.m.	1 p.m.– 4 p.m.	Petosky, Michigan	Odawa Casino Resort 1760 Lears Road Petosky, MI 49770 (877) 442-6464
July 31, 2013	9 a.m.– 12 p.m.	1 p.m.– 4 p.m.	Indian Island, Maine	Sockalexis Arena 16 Wabanaki Way Indian Island, ME 04468 (800) 255-1293
August 6, 2013	9 a.m.– 12 p.m.	1 p.m.– 4 p.m.	Marksville, Louisiana	Paragon Casino Resort 711 Paragon Place Marksville, LA 71351 (800) 946-1946

Tribal consultations will be held at each location from 9am to 12pm and public meetings will be held from 1pm to 4pm. After the close of the comment period on the discussion draft, the Department will evaluate those comments as it moves forward in the development of a proposed rule. The Department will seek additional public comment and consult further with tribes after issuing the proposed rule.

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