Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Kevin K. Washburn today issued final determinations for two petitioners under the existing Federal Acknowledgment process. The decisions include a final determination to acknowledge the petitioner known as the Pamunkey Indian Tribe (Petitioner #323) as a federally recognized Indian tribe, and a final determination on remand to decline acknowledgment for the petitioner known as the Duwamish Tribal Organization (DTO) (Petitioner #25).

The Pamunkey Indian Tribe, located in Virginia, was found to have met all seven mandatory criteria for Federal acknowledgment as set forth in 25 CFR Part 83.7. This is the second federal acknowledgement to take place during the Obama Administration. "This work reflects the most solemn responsibilities of the United States," Washburn said. "Our professional historians, anthropologists, and genealogists spent thousands of hours of staff time researching and applying our rigorous acknowledgment criteria to these petitions."

Specifically, the Department determined that the Pamunkey Indian Tribe has:

- Continuously identified as an American Indian body since 1900;
- Existed as a distinct community and maintained political influence over its members since historical times;
- Provided governing documents describing its governance procedures and membership criteria;
- Provided a list of its current members who descend from a historical Indian tribe and who are not also members of another federally recognized tribe;
- Never been subject to congressional legislation that expressly terminated or forbade the federal relationship.

The Pamunkey Indian Tribe has occupied a land base in southeastern King William County, Virginia - shown on a 1770 map as "Indian Town" - since the Colonial Era in the 1600s. Today, the area exists as a state Indian reservation. The Tribe has a current membership of 203 individuals and elects its own leaders.

The Department also issued a final determination on remand declining to recognize the Duwamish Tribal Organization. The Department reached the same conclusion in September 2001, declining to acknowledge the DTO following an evaluation under its 1978 regulations. The U.S. District Court in Western Washington vacated that decision in 2013 and remanded it back to the Department for review under 1994 revisions to the regulations or "explain why it declines to do so." This final determination on remand concludes the administrative process: the DTO petitioner does not meet the requirements for Federal acknowledgment as an Indian tribe under either the 1978 or 1994 regulations. The DTO, which first formed in 1925, is headquartered in Seattle, Washington. The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Interior Department's trust responsibilities and promoting self-determination on behalf of the federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments.

The Assistant Secretary also oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is responsible for providing

services to approximately 1.9 million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the federally recognized tribes, and the Office of Federal Acknowledgment, which administers the Federal Acknowledgment Process. The Department recently issued new regulations governing the Federal Acknowledgment Process (25 CFR Part 83). Those regulations will be effective July 31, 2015.
