Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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**WASHINGTON, D.C. -** Acting Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs Aurene M. Martin today announced she has issued a Notice of Proposed Finding whereby she proposes to decline to acknowledge that the Golden Hill Paugussett Tribe (petition #81) in Trumbull, Conn., exists as an Indian tribe within the meaning of Federal law. The proposed finding is based on a determination that the petitioner does not satisfy three of seven mandatory criteria for Federal acknowledgment under 25 CFR Part 83, the Federal acknowledgment regulations, and therefore does not meet the requirements for a government-to-government relationship with the United States.

Since 1823, the evidence shows that the historical Golden Hill Indians ceased to exist as a distinct community, as required by criterion 83.7(b).

Between 1802 and 1973, the evidence does not show an entity with an internal political process, as required by criterion 83.7(c). Since 1973, a few individuals formally organized into a more visible and active political entity. However, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate significant social interaction within the group, or widespread support for or involvement in political processes.

Thirdly, the petitioner does not meet the standard set by criterion 83.7(e). The petitioner has not shown that its membership consists of individuals who descend from a historical Indian tribe or tribes. There is insufficient evidence to verify that the petitioner's ancestors descended from a historical tribe. Although the petitioner submitted several membership lists, none are sufficient to meet the criterion.

The petitioner has met the other four mandatory criteria for Federal acknowledgment. The portion of the group claiming descent from the historical Golden Hill has been identified consistently as an American Indian entity from 1900 to the present as required by criterion 83.7(a). In accordance with 83.7(d), it submitted a copy of its governing document and membership criteria. None of the petitioner's members are currently enrolled with any Federally acknowledged tribe [83.7(f)]. The Golden Hill has never been the subject of legislation terminating or forbidding the Federal relationship [83.7(g)].

The proposed finding is based on the available evidence and has been considered under a court-approved negotiated agreement. The agreement only modified the timeframes for issuing the proposed finding. It did not modify the regulatory timeframes following the issuance of the proposed finding or the standards required to demonstrate that the criteria are met.

The Notice of Proposed Finding on the Golden Hill Paugussett will be published in the *Federal Register.* As provided by 25 CFR 83.10(i), the petitioner or any individual or organization wishing to challenge or support the proposed finding shall have 180 days after the notice's publication date to submit arguments and evidence to rebut or support the proposed finding before any final determination is issued.

The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Department's trust responsibilities and promoting self-determination on behalf of tribal governments, American

Indians and Alaska Natives. The Assistant Secretary, who oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Federal Acknowledgment Process, is also responsible for providing services to approximately 1.4 million American Indians and Alaska Natives from the 562 federally recognized tribes.

***Note to Editors:*** *The abbreviated version of the Mandatory Criteria for Federal Acknowledgment that accompanies this press release may be viewed via the Department's website at www.doi.gov*