



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

MAR 11 2020

The Honorable Aimie Lucas
Chairwoman, Cahto Tribe of the Laytonville Rancheria
P.O. Box 1239
Laytonville, California 95454

Dear Chairwoman Lucas:

This is the decision of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs on the fee-to-trust land application dated February 7, 2017, from the Cahto Tribe of the Laytonville Rancheria (Tribe) for an off-reservation, non-gaming parcel consisting of 1.38 acres and commonly referred to as Assessor's Parcel Number 014-130-055 (Parcel). On May 15, 2015, by Resolution No. 2015-05-15 #13, the Tribe requests to have the Parcel taken into trust status. The Parcel is located in the County of Mendocino, California, is not contiguous to current trust lands and is approximately one mile from the Tribe's current trust lands.

Description of the Land

The Parcel is more particularly described as:

Lots 5 and 29, as numbered and designated upon that certain map entitled "Survey and Map of Long Valley Manor" in Section 12, Township North, Range 15 West, Mount Diablo Meridian, now on file in the office of the County Recorder, County of Mendocino, State of California.

Excepting therefrom that portion described in the deed to the State of California recorded September 14, 1987 in Book 1645 of Official Records, Page 197, Mendocino County Records.

Compliance with 25 Code of Federal Regulations Part 151

The applicable regulations are set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 25, Part 151, herein referred to as 25 CFR 151. The regulations specify that it is the policy of the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to accept lands "in trust" for the benefit of Tribes.

Land not held in trust or restricted status may only be acquired for an individual Indian or a Tribe in trust status when such acquisition is authorized by an act of Congress. No acquisition of land in trust status, including a transfer of land already held in trust or restricted status, shall be valid unless the acquisition is approved by the Secretary. Subject to the provisions contained in the acts of Congress which authorize land acquisitions, land may be acquired for a Tribe in trust status:

- (1) When the property is located within the exterior boundaries of the tribe's reservation or adjacent thereto, or within a tribal consolidation area; or
- (2) When the tribe already owns an interest in the land; or

- (3) When the Secretary determines that the acquisition of the land is necessary to facilitate tribal self-determination, economic development, or Indian housing.

This acquisition facilitates Tribal self-determination, economic development, or Indian housing. Therefore, it is within the land acquisition policy as set forth by the Secretary.

Pursuant to 25 CFR 151, the Secretary shall consider the following requirements in evaluating Tribal requests for the acquisition of lands in trust status, when the land is located outside of and noncontiguous to the Tribe's reservation, and the acquisition is not mandated:

(a) The criteria listed in 25 CFR 151.10 (a) through (c) and (e) through (h);

(b) The location of the land relative to state boundaries, and its distance from the boundaries of the Tribe's reservation, shall be considered as follows: as the distance between the Tribe's reservation and the land to be acquired increases, the Secretary shall give greater scrutiny to the tribe's justification of anticipated benefits from the acquisition. The Secretary shall give greater weight to the concerns raised pursuant to paragraph (d) of this section.

(c) Where land is being acquired for business purposes, the Tribe shall provide a plan which specifies the anticipated economic benefits associated with the proposed use.

(d) Contact with state and local governments pursuant to 25 CFR 151.10 (e) and (f) shall be completed as follows: Upon receipt of a Tribe's written request to have lands taken in trust, the Secretary shall notify the state and local governments having regulatory jurisdiction over the land to be acquired. The notice shall inform the state and local government that each will be given 30 days in which to provide written comment as to the acquisition's potential impacts on regulatory jurisdiction, real property taxes and special assessments.

Our review of the requirements to evaluate this Tribal request as set forth in 25 CFR 151, determined the following:

Section 151.10(a) – Statutory Authority

For the reasons explained below, we conclude that the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA)¹ provides the Secretary with the authority to acquire the Parcel in trust for the Tribe.

¹ Act of June 18, 1934, c. 576, 48 Stat. 984.

I. BACKGROUND

The Tribe's existing land base consists of the Laytonville Rancheria (Rancheria).² The United States established the 200-acre Rancheria³ in 1908 when it purchased land from missionaries for the Tribe under authority of the Act of June 21, 1906.⁴ In 1934, Congress enacted the IRA. As a statute of general applicability, the IRA applied to Indian reservations unless, pursuant to Section 18, "a majority of the adult Indians, voting at a special election duly called by the Secretary of the Interior, shall vote against its application." On June 10, 1935, the Secretary called a Section 18 election for the Indians residing on the Rancheria to determine whether the IRA would apply to the Tribe.⁵ By a vote of 11 to 7, the Tribe rejected the IRA.⁶ In 1967, the Tribe adopted, and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs approved, non-IRA Articles of Association ("Articles").⁷ The Tribe's government continues to operate pursuant to the 1967 Articles, as amended,⁸ and the Rancheria, which has remained under federal jurisdiction from the time of its establishment, serves as its headquarters.⁹ The Parcel, where the Tribe intends to develop a travel center, is located less than one mile from the Rancheria's eastern boundary and abuts Highway 101 in the town of Laytonville, California.¹⁰

II. STANDARD OF REVIEW

A. Four-Step Procedure to Determine Eligibility

Section 5 of the IRA provides the Secretary discretionary authority to acquire any interest in lands for the purpose of providing lands in trust for Indians.¹¹ Section 19 defines "Indian" in relevant part as including the following three categories:

[**Category 1**] all persons of Indian descent who are members of any recognized Indian tribe now under Federal jurisdiction, and [**Category 2**] all persons who are descendants of such members who were, on June 1, 1934, residing within the present boundaries of any Indian reservation, and shall

² Application at 1.

³ ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS (hereafter "ARCIA") FOR 1915 at 183 (1915) (identifying 200-acre Rancheria purchased for \$2,500).

⁴ Application at 4; Indian Department Appropriations Act of June 21, 1906, 34 Stat. 325, 333. *See also*, U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, *American Indian Reservations and Trust Areas* (Veronica E. Velarde Tiller, ed.) at 266 (Jan. 1, 1996).

⁵ Theodore H. Haas, *Ten Years of Tribal Government Under I.R.A.* at 15 (1947) (hereafter "Haas Report").

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Articles of Association of the Laytonville Rancheria (adopted Feb. 12, 1967, approved by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Jul. 21, 1967).

⁸ Articles of Association of the Cahto Tribe of the Laytonville Rancheria (Jan. 28, 2006, approved by BIA Feb. 16, 2006).

⁹ Application at 4. *See also* Bureau of Indian Affairs, Central California Agency Jurisdictional Map – Pacific Region, <https://www.bia.gov/regional-offices/pacific/central-california-agency>.

¹⁰ Application at 2.

¹¹ 25 U.S.C. § 5105.

further include [Category 3] all other persons of one-half or more Indian blood.¹²

In 2009, the United States Supreme Court (“Supreme Court”) in *Carcieri v. Salazar*¹³ construed the term “now” in Category 1 to refer to 1934, the year of the IRA’s enactment. The Supreme Court did not consider the meaning of the phrase “under federal jurisdiction,” however, or whether it applied to the phrase “recognized Indian tribe.”

To guide the implementation of the Secretary’s discretionary authority under Section 5 after *Carcieri*, the Department in 2010 prepared a two-part procedure for determining when an applicant Tribe was “under federal jurisdiction” in 1934.¹⁴ The Solicitor of the Interior (Solicitor) later memorialized the Department’s interpretation in Sol. Op. M-37029.¹⁵ Despite this, however, uncertainty persisted over what evidence could be submitted for the inquiry and how the Department would weigh it, prompting some Tribes to devote considerable resources to researching and collecting any and all forms of potentially relevant evidence, in some cases leading to submissions totaling thousands of pages. To address this uncertainty, in 2018 the Solicitor’s Office began a review of the Department’s eligibility procedures to provide guidance for determining relevant evidence. This prompted questions concerning Sol. Op. M-37029’s interpretation of Category 1, on which its eligibility procedures relied. This uncertainty prompted the Solicitor to review Sol. Op. M-37029’s two-part procedure for determining eligibility under Category 1, and the interpretation on which it relied.

On March 9, 2020, the Solicitor withdrew Sol. Op. M-37029. The Solicitor concluded that its interpretation of Category 1 was not consistent with the ordinary meaning, statutory context, legislative history, or contemporary administrative understanding of the phrase “recognized Indian tribe now under federal jurisdiction.”¹⁶ In its place, the Solicitor issued a new, four-step procedure for determining eligibility under Category 1 to be used by attorneys in the Office of the Solicitor (Solicitor’s Office).¹⁷

At Step One, the Solicitor’s Office determines whether or not Congress enacted legislation after 1934 making the IRA applicable to a particular Tribe. The existence of such authority makes it unnecessary to determine if the Tribe was “under federal jurisdiction” in 1934. In the absence of such authority, the Solicitor’s Office proceeds to Step Two.

¹² 25 U.S.C. § 5129 (bracketed numerals added).

¹³ 555 U.S. 379 (2009) (hereafter “*Carcieri*”).

¹⁴ U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, Record of Decision, *Trust Acquisition of, and Reservation Proclamation for the 151.87-acre Cowlitz Parcel in Clark County, Washington, for the Cowlitz Indian Tribe* at 77-106 (Dec. 17, 2010) (hereafter “Cowlitz ROD”). See also Memorandum from the Solicitor to Regional Solicitors, Field Solicitors, and SOL-Division of Indian Affairs, Checklist for Solicitor’s Office Review of Fee-to-Trust Applications (Mar. 7, 2014), revised (Jan. 5, 2017).

¹⁵ Sol. Op. M-37029, *The Meaning of ‘Under Federal Jurisdiction’ for Purposes of the Indian Reorganization Act* (Mar. 12, 2014) (hereafter “M-37029”).

¹⁶ Sol. Op. M-37055, *Withdrawal of M-37029, The Meaning of ‘Under Federal Jurisdiction’ for Purposes of the Indian Reorganization Act* (Mar. 9, 2020).

¹⁷ *Procedure for Determining Eligibility for Land-into-Trust under the First Definition of “Indian” in Section 19 of the Indian Reorganization Act*, Memorandum from the Solicitor to Regional Solicitors, Field Solicitors, and SOL-Division of Indian Affairs (Mar. 10, 2020) (Solicitor’s Guidance).

Step Two determines whether the applicant Tribe was under federal jurisdiction in 1934, that is, whether the evidence shows that the federal government exercised or administered its responsibilities toward Indians in 1934 over the applicant Tribe or its members as such. If so, the applicant Tribe may be deemed eligible under Category 1 without further inquiry. The Solicitor's Guidance describes types of evidence that presumptively demonstrate that a Tribe was under federal jurisdiction in 1934. In the absence of dispositive evidence, the inquiry proceeds to Step Three.

Step Three determines whether an applicant Tribe's evidence sufficiently demonstrates that the applicant Tribe was "recognized" in or before 1934 and remained under jurisdiction in 1934. The Solicitor determined that the phrase "recognized Indian tribe" as used in Category 1 does not have the same meaning as the modern concept of a "federally recognized" (or "federally acknowledged") Tribe, a concept that did not evolve until the 1970s, after which it was incorporated in the Department's federal acknowledgment procedures.¹⁸ Based on the Department's historic understanding of the term, the Solicitor interpreted "recognition" to refer to indicia of congressional and executive actions either taken toward a Tribe with whom the United States dealt on a more or less government-to-government basis or that clearly acknowledged a trust responsibility consistent with the evolution of federal Indian policy. The Solicitor identified forms of evidence that establish a rebuttable presumption that that an applicant Tribe was "recognized" in a political-legal sense before 1934 and remained under federal jurisdiction in 1934. In the absence of such evidence, the inquiry finally moves to Step Four.

Step Four assesses the totality of an applicant tribe's non-dispositive evidence to determine whether it is sufficient to show that a Tribe was "recognized" in or before 1934 and remained "under federal jurisdiction" through 1934. Given the historical changes in federal Indian policy over time, and the corresponding evolution of the Department's responsibilities, a one-size-fits-all approach for evaluating the totality of a Tribal applicant's evidence is not possible or desirable. Attorneys in the Solicitor's Office must evaluate the evidence on a case-by-case basis within the context of a Tribe's unique circumstances, and in consultation with the Deputy Solicitor for Indian Affairs and the Associate Solicitor, Division of Indian Affairs.

To further assist Solicitor's Office attorneys in implementing this four-step procedure by understanding the statutory interpretation on which it relies, the Solicitor's Guidance includes a memorandum¹⁹ detailing the Department's revised interpretation of the meaning of the phrases "now under federal jurisdiction" and "recognized Indian tribe" and how they work together.

¹⁸ 25 C.F.R. Part 83.

¹⁹ *Determining Eligibility under the First Definition of "Indian" in Section 19 of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934*, Memorandum from the Deputy Solicitor for Indian Affairs to the Solicitor (Mar. 5, 2020) ("Deputy Solicitor's Memorandum").

B. The Meaning of the Phrase “Now Under Federal Jurisdiction.”

1. Statutory Context.

Considered in context, the phrase “now under federal jurisdiction” should be read as modifying the phrase “recognized Indian tribe.”²⁰ The Supreme Court in *Carcieri* did not identify a temporal requirement for recognition as it did for being under federal jurisdiction,²¹ and the majority opinion focused on the meaning of “now” without addressing whether or how the phrase “now under federal jurisdiction” modifies the meaning of “recognized Indian tribe.”²² In his concurrence, Justice Breyer also advised that a Tribe recognized *after* 1934 might nonetheless have been “under federal jurisdiction” *in* 1934.²³ By “recognized,” Justice Breyer appeared to mean “*federally* recognized”²⁴ in the formal, political sense that had evolved by the 1970s, not in the sense in which Congress likely understood the term in 1934. He also considered how “later recognition” might reflect earlier “Federal jurisdiction,”²⁵ and gave examples of Tribes federally recognized after 1934 with whom the United States had negotiated treaties before 1934.²⁶ Justice Breyer’s suggestion that Category 1 does not preclude eligibility for Tribes “federally recognized” *after* 1934 is consistent with interpreting Category 1 as requiring evidence of federal actions toward a Tribe with whom the United States dealt on a more or less sovereign-to-sovereign basis or for whom the federal government had clearly acknowledged a trust responsibility in or before 1934, as the example of the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians of Washington (“Stillaguamish Tribe”) shows.²⁷ It is also consistent with the Department’s policies that in order to apply for trust-land acquisitions under the IRA, a Tribe must appear on the official list of entities federally recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as such.²⁸

The Solicitor noted that Category 1’s grammar supports this view. The adverb “now” is part of the prepositional phrase “under federal jurisdiction,”²⁹ which it temporally qualifies.³⁰

²⁰ Deputy Solicitor’s Memorandum at 19. *See also* *Cty. of Amador*, 872 F.3d at 1020, n. 8 (*Carcieri* leaves open whether “recognition” and “jurisdiction” requirements are distinct requirements or comprise a single requirement).

²¹ *Carcieri* at 382-83.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Id.* at 398 (Breyer, J., concurring).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Id.* at 399 (Breyer, J., concurring).

²⁶ *Id.* at 398-99 (Breyer, J., concurring) (discussing Stillaguamish Tribe, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, and Mole Lake Chippewa Indians).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994, tit. 1, § 104, Pub. L. 103-454, 108 Stat. 4791, codified at 25 U.S.C. § 5131 (mandating annual publication of list of all Indian tribes recognized by Secretary as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians). The Department’s land-into-trust regulations incorporate the Department’s official list of federally recognized tribe by reference. *See* 25 C.F.R. § 151.2.

²⁹ *Grand Ronde*, 830 F.3d 552, 560 (D.C. Cir. 2016). The *Grand Ronde* court found “the more difficult question” to be which part of the expression “recognized Indian tribe” the prepositional phrase modified. *Ibid.* The court concluded it modified only the word “tribe” “before its modification by the adjective ‘recognized.’” *Ibid.* But the court appears to have understood “recognized” as used in the IRA as meaning “federally recognized” in the modern sense, without considering its meaning in historical context.

³⁰ H. C. House and S.E. Harman, *Descriptive English Grammar* at 163 (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1934) (hereafter “House and Harman”) (adverbs may modify prepositional phrases).

Prepositional phrases function as modifiers and follow the noun phrase that they modify.³¹ Category 1's grammar therefore supports interpreting the phrase "now under federal jurisdiction" as intended to modify "recognized Indian tribe." This interpretation finds further support in the IRA's legislative history, discussed below, and in Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier's statement that the phrase "now under federal jurisdiction" was intended to limit the IRA's application.³² This suggests Commissioner Collier understood the phrase "now under federal jurisdiction" to limit and thus modify "recognized Indian tribe." This is further consistent with the IRA's purpose and intent, which was to remedy the harmful effects of allotment.³³ These included the loss of Indian lands and the displacement and dispersal of tribal communities.³⁴ Lacking an official list of "recognized" Tribes at the time,³⁵ it was unclear in 1934 which Tribes remained under federal supervision. Because the policies of allotment and assimilation went hand-in-hand,³⁶ left unmodified, the phrase "recognized Indian tribe" could include Tribes disestablished or terminated before 1934.

2. Statutory Terms.

At the outset, the Solicitor concluded that the expression "now under federal jurisdiction" in Category 1 cannot reasonably be interpreted as synonymous with the sphere of Congress's plenary authority³⁷ and is instead better interpreted as referring to Tribes with whom the United States had clearly dealt on or a more or less sovereign-to-sovereign basis or as to whom the United States had clearly acknowledged a trust responsibility in or before 1934.

³¹ L. Beason and M. Lester, *A Commonsense Guide to Grammar and Usage* (7th ed.) at 15-16 (2015) ("Adjective prepositional phrases are always locked into position following the nouns they modify."); see also J. E. Wells, *Practical Review Grammar* (1928) at 305. A noun phrase consists of a noun and all of its modifiers. *Id.* at 16.

³² Sen. Hrgs. at 266 (statement of Commissioner Collier). See also *Carcieri*, 555 U.S. at 389 (citing Letter from John Collier, Commissioner, to Superintendents (Mar. 7, 1936) ([IRA Section 19] provides, in effect, that the term 'Indian' as used therein shall include—(1) all persons of Indian descent who are members of any recognized tribe that was under Federal jurisdiction at the date of the Act * * *) (emphasis added by Supreme Court)); *Cty. of Amador*, 872 F.3d at 1026 ("under Federal jurisdiction" should be read to limit the set of "recognized Indian tribes" to those tribes that already had some sort of significant relationship with the federal government as of 1934, even if those tribes were not yet "recognized" (emphasis original)); *Grand Ronde*, 830 F.3d at 564 (though the IRA's jurisdictional nexus was intended as "some kind of limiting principle," precisely how remained unclear).

³³ *Readjustment of Indian Affairs. Hearings before the Committee on Indian Affairs, House of Representatives, Seventy-Third Congress, Second Session, on H.R. 7902, A Bill To Grant To Indians Living Under Federal Tutelage The Freedom To Organize For Purposes Of Local Self-Government And Economic Enterprise; To Provide For The Necessary Training Of Indians In Administrative And Economic Affairs; To Conserve And Develop Indian Lands; And To Promote The More Effective Administration Of Justice In Matters Affecting Indian Tribes And Communities By Establishing A Federal Court Of Indian Affairs*, 73d Cong. at 233-34 (1934) (hereafter "H. Hrgs.") (citing Letter, President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Rep. Edgar Howard (Apt. 28, 1934)).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ In 1979, the BIA for the first time published in the *Federal Register* a list of federally acknowledged Indian tribes. "Indian Tribal Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services from the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs," 44 Fed. Reg. 7235 (Feb. 6, 1979); see also *Cty. of Amador*, 872 F.3d at 1023 ("In 1934, when Congress enacted the IRA, there was no comprehensive list of recognized tribes, nor was there a 'formal policy or process for determining tribal status'" (citing William Wood, *Indians, Tribes, and (Federal) Jurisdiction*, 65 U. KAN. L. REV. 415, 429-30 (2016))).

³⁶ *Hackford v. Babbitt*, 14 F.3d 1457, 1459 (10th Cir. 1994).

³⁷ Deputy Solicitor's Memorandum at 9.

The contemporaneous legal definition of “jurisdiction” defined it as the “power and authority” of the courts “as distinguished from the other departments.”³⁸ The legal distinction between judicial and administrative jurisdiction is significant. Further, because the statutory phrase at issue here includes more than just the word “jurisdiction,” its use of the preposition “under” sheds additional light on its meaning. In 1934, BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY defined “under” as most frequently used in “its secondary sense meaning of ‘inferior’ or ‘subordinate.’”³⁹ It defined “jurisdiction” in terms of “power and authority,” further defining “authority” as used “[i]n government law” as meaning “the right and power of public officers to require obedience to their orders lawfully issued in the scope of their public duties.”⁴⁰

Congress added the phrase “under federal jurisdiction” to a statute designed to govern the Department’s administration of Indian affairs and certain benefits for Indians. Seen in that light, these contemporaneous definitions support interpreting the phrase as referring to the federal government’s exercise and administration of its responsibilities for Indians. Further support for this interpretation comes from the IRA’s context. Congress enacted the IRA to promote Tribal self-government but made the Secretary responsible for its implementation. Interpreting the phrase “now under federal jurisdiction” as modifying “recognized Indian tribe” supports the interpretation of “jurisdiction” to mean the continuing administration of federal authority over Indian tribes already “recognized” as such. The addition of the temporal adverb “now” to the phrase provides further grounds for interpreting “recognized” as referring to a *previous* exercise of that same authority, that is, in or before 1934.⁴¹

3. Legislative History.

The IRA’s legislative history lends additional support for interpreting “now under federal jurisdiction” as modifying “recognized Indian tribe.” A thread that runs throughout the IRA’s legislative history is a concern for whether the Act would apply to Indians not then under federal supervision. On April 26, 1934, Commissioner Collier informed members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (“Senate Committee”) that the original draft bill’s definition of “Indian” had been intended to do just that:⁴²

Senator THOMAS of Oklahoma. (...) In past years former Commissioners and Secretaries have held that when an Indian was divested of property and money in effect under the law he was not an Indian, and because of that numerous Indians have gone from under the supervision of the Indian Office.

³⁸ BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY at 1038 (3d ed. 1933) (hereafter “BLACK’S”).

³⁹ BLACK’S at 1774.

⁴⁰ BLACK’S at 171. It separately defines “subject to” as meaning “obedient to; governed or affected by.”

⁴¹ Our interpretation of “now under federal jurisdiction” does not require federal officials to have been aware of a tribe’s circumstances or jurisdictional status in 1934. As explained below, prior to M-37029, the Department long understood the term “recognized” to refer to political or administrative acts that brought a tribe under federal authority. We interpret “now under federal jurisdiction” as referring to the issue of whether such a “recognized” tribe maintained its jurisdictional status in 1934, i.e., whether federal trust obligations remained, not whether particular officials were cognizant of those obligations.

⁴² *To Grant to Indians Living Under Federal Tutelage the Freedom to Organize for Purposes of Local Self-Government and Economic Enterprise: Hearings on S. 2755 and S. 3645 Before the S. Comm. on Indian Affairs, 73rd Cong. at 80 (Apr. 26, 1934) (hereafter “Sen. Hrgs.”). See also Grand Ronde, 75 F.Supp.3d at 387, 399 (noting same).*

Commissioner COLLIER. Yes.

Senator THOMAS. Numerous tribes have been lost (...) It is contemplated now to hunt those Indians up and give them a status again and try do to something for them?

Commissioner COLLIER: This bill provides that any Indian who is a member of a recognized Indian tribe or band shall be eligible to [*sic*] Government aid.

Senator THOMAS. Without regard to whether or not he is now under your supervision?

Commissioner COLLIER. Without regard; yes. *It definitely throws open Government aid to those rejected Indians.*⁴³

The phrase “rejected Indians” referred to Indians who had gone out from under federal supervision.⁴⁴ In Commissioner Collier’s view, the IRA “does definitely recognize that an Indian [that] has been divested of his property is no reason why Uncle Sam does not owe him something. It owes him more.”⁴⁵ Commissioner Collier’s broad view was consistent with the bill’s original stated policy to “reassert the obligations of guardianship where such obligations have been improvidently relaxed.”⁴⁶

On May 17, 1934, the last day of hearings, the Senate Committee continued to express concerns over the breadth of the bill’s definition of “Indian,” returning again to the draft definitions of “Indian” as they stood in the committee print. Category 1 now defined “Indian” as persons of

⁴³ Sen. Hrgs. at 79-80 (Apr. 26, 1934) (emphasis added).

⁴⁴ See LEWIS MERIAM, THE INSTITUTE FOR GOVT. RESEARCH, STUDIES IN ADMINISTRATION, THE PROBLEM OF INDIAN ADMINISTRATION at 763 (1928) (hereafter “MERIAM REPORT”) (noting that issuance of patents to individual Indians under Dawes Act or Burke Act had “the effect of removing them in part at least from the jurisdiction of the national government”). See also Sen. Hrgs. at 30 (statement of Commissioner Collier) (discussing the role the Allotment Policy had in making approximately 100,000 Indians landless).

⁴⁵ Sen. Hrgs. at 80.

⁴⁶ H.R. 7902, tit. III, § 1. See Sen. Hrgs. at 20 (“The bill does not bring to an end, or imply or contemplate, a cessation of Federal guardianship and special Federal service to Indians. On the contrary, it makes permanent the guardianship services, and reasserts them for those Indians who have been made landless by the Government’s own acts.”).

Indian descent who were “members of any recognized Indian tribe.”⁴⁷ As on previous days,⁴⁸ Chairman Wheeler and Senator Thomas questioned both the overlap between definitions and whether they would include Indians not then under federal supervision or persons not otherwise “Indian.”⁴⁹

The Senate Committee’s concerns for these issues touched on other provisions of the IRA as well. The colloquy that precipitated the addition of “now under federal jurisdiction” began with a discussion of Section 18, which authorized votes to reject the IRA by Indians residing on a reservation. Senator Thomas stated that this would exclude “roaming bands” or “remnants of a band” that are “practically lost” like those in his home state of Oklahoma, who at the time were neither “registered,” “enrolled,” “supervised,” or “under the authority of the Indian Office.”⁵⁰ Senator Thomas felt that “If they are not a tribe of Indians they do not come under [the Act].”⁵¹ Chairman Wheeler conceded that such Indians lacked rights at the time, but emphasized that the purpose of the Act was intended “as a matter of fact, to take care of the Indians that are taken care of at the present time,”⁵² that is, those Indians then under federal supervision.

⁴⁷ Sen. Hrgs. at 234 (citing committee print, § 19). The revised bill was renumbered S. 3645 and introduced in the Senate on May 18, 1934. *Tribal Self-Government and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934*, 70 MICH. L. REV. 955, 963 n. 55 (1972) (hereafter “*Tribal Self-Government*”) (citing 78 CONG. REC. 9071 (1934)). S. 3645 which, as amended, became the IRA, differed significantly from H.R. 7902 and S. 2755, and its changes resulted from discussions between Chairman Wheeler and Commissioner John Collier to resolve and eliminate the main points in controversy. Sen. Hrgs. at 237. The Senate Committee reported S. 3645 out four days after its reintroduction, 78 CONG. REC. 9221, which the Senate debated soon after. The Senate passed the bill on June 12, 1934. *Id.* at 11139. The House began debate on June 15. *Id.* at 11724-44. H.R. 7902 was laid on the table and S. 3645 was passed in its place the same day, with some variations. *Id.* A conference committee was then formed, which submitted a report on June 16. *Id.* at 12001-04. The House and Senate both approved the final version on June 16. *Id.* at 12001-04, 12161-65, which was presented to the President and signed on June 18, 1934. *Id.* at 12340, 12451. *See generally Tribal Self-Government* at 961-63.

⁴⁸ *See, e.g.*, Sen. Hrgs. at 80 (remarks of Senator Elmer Thomas) (questioning whether bill is intended to extend benefits to tribes not now under federal supervision); *ibid.* (remarks of Chairman Wheeler) (questioning degree of Indian descent as drafted); *id.* at 150-151; *id.* at 164 (questioning federal responsibilities to existing wards with minimal Indian descent).

⁴⁹ *See, e.g.*, Sen. Hrgs. at 239 (discussing Sec. 3), 254 (discussing Sec. 10), 261-62 (discussing Sec. 18), 263-66 (discussing Sec. 19).

⁵⁰ Sen. Hrgs. at 263.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* By “tribe,” Senator Thomas here may have meant the Indians residing on a reservation. A similar usage appears earlier in the Committee’s discussion of Section 10 of the committee print (enacted as Section 17 of the IRA), Sen. Hrgs. at 250-55. Section 10 originally required charters to be ratified by a vote of the adult Indians residing within “the territory specified in the charter.” *Id.* at 232. Chairman Wheeler suggested using “on the reservation” instead to prevent “any small band or group of Indians” to “come in on the reservation and ask for a charter to take over tribal property.” *Id.* at 253. Senator Joseph O’Mahoney recommended the phrase “within the territory over which the tribe has jurisdiction” instead, prompting Senator Peter Norbeck to ask what “tribe” meant—“Is that the reservation unit?” *Id.* at 254. Commissioner Collier then read from Section 19, which at that time defined “tribe” as “any Indian tribe, band, nation, pueblo, or other native political group or organization,” a definition the Chairman suggested he could not support. *Ibid.* As ultimately enacted, Section 17 authorizes the Secretary to issue charters of incorporation to “one-third of the adult Indians” if ratified, however, “by a majority vote of the adult Indians living on the reservation.”

⁵² *Ibid.*

Acknowledging that landless Indians ought to be provided for, Chairman Wheeler questioned how the Department could do so if they were not “wards of the Government at the present time.”⁵³ When Senator Thomas mentioned that the Catawbas in South Carolina and the Seminoles in Florida were “just as much Indians as any others,”⁵⁴ despite not then being under federal supervision, Commissioner Collier pointed out that such groups might still come within Category 3’s blood-quantum criterion, which was then one-quarter.⁵⁵ After a brief digression, Senator Thomas asked whether, if the blood quantum were raised to one-half, Indians with less than one-half blood quantum would be covered by the Act with respect to their trust property.⁵⁶ Chairman Wheeler thought not, “unless they are enrolled at the present time.”⁵⁷ As the discussion turned to Section 19, Chairman Wheeler returned to the blood quantum issue, stating that Category 3’s blood-quantum criterion should be raised to one-half, which it was in final version of the Act.⁵⁸

Senator Thomas then noted that Category 1 and Category 2, as drafted, were inconsistent with Category 3. Category 1 would include any person of “Indian descent” without regard to blood quantum, so long as they were members of a “recognized Indian tribe,” while Category 2 included their “descendants” residing on a reservation.⁵⁹ Senator Thomas observed that under these definitions, persons with remote Indian ancestry could come under the Act.⁶⁰ Commissioner Collier then pointed out that at least with respect to Category 2, the descendants would have to reside within a reservation at the present time.⁶¹

After asides on the IRA’s effect on Alaska Natives and the Secretary’s authority to issue patents,⁶² Chairman Wheeler finally turned to the IRA’s definition of “tribe,”⁶³ which as then drafted included “any Indian tribe, band, nation, pueblo, or other native political group or organization.”⁶⁴ Chairman Wheeler and Senator Thomas thought this definition too broad.⁶⁵ Senator Thomas asked whether it would include the Catawbas,⁶⁶ most of whose members were thought to lack sufficient blood quantum under Category 3, but who descended from Indians and resided on a state reservation.⁶⁷ Chairman Wheeler thought not, if they could not meet the blood-quantum requirement.⁶⁸ Senator O’Mahoney from Wyoming then suggested that Categories 1

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Id.* at 264.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* (statement of Chairman Burton Wheeler) (“You will find here [*i.e.*, Section 19] later on a provision covering just what you have reference to.”).

⁵⁹ *Id.* at 264-65.

⁶⁰ *Id.* at 264.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Id.* at 265.

⁶³ *Ibid.* at 265.

⁶⁴ *Compare* Sen. Hrgs. at 6 (S. 2755, § 13(b)), *with id.* at 234 (committee print, § 19). The phrase “native political group or organization” was later removed.

⁶⁵ Sen. Hrgs. at 265.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Id.* at 266. The Catawbas at the time resided on a reservation established for their benefit by the State of South Carolina. *See* Catawba Indians of South Carolina, Sen. Doc. 92, 71st Cong. (1930).

⁶⁸ *Id.* at 264.

and 3 overlapped, suggesting the Catawbias might still come within the definition of Category 1 since they were of Indian descent and they “certainly are an Indian tribe.”⁶⁹

Chairman Wheeler appeared to concede, admitting there “would have to [be] a limitation after the description of the tribe.”⁷⁰ Senator O’Mahoney responded, saying “If you wanted to exclude any of them [from the Act] you certainly would in my judgment.”⁷¹ Chairman Wheeler proceeded to express concerns for those having little or no Indian descent being “under the supervision of the Government,” persons he had earlier suggested should be excluded from the Act.⁷² Apparently in response, Senator O’Mahoney then said, “If I may suggest, that could be handled by some separate provision excluding from the act certain types, but [it] must have a general definition.”⁷³ It was at this point that Commissioner Collier, who attended the morning’s hearings with Assistant Solicitor Felix S. Cohen,⁷⁴ asked

Would this not meet your thought, Senator: After the words ‘recognized Indian tribe’ in line 1 insert ‘now under Federal jurisdiction’? That would limit the act to the Indians now under Federal jurisdiction, except that other Indians of more than one-half Indian blood would get help.⁷⁵

Without further explanation or discussion, the hearings adjourned.

The IRA’s legislative history does not unambiguously explain what Congress intended “now under federal jurisdiction” to mean or in what way it was intended to limit the phrase “recognized Indian tribe.” However, the same phrase was used in submissions by the Indian Rights Association to the House of Representatives Committee on Indian Affairs (“House Committee”), where it described “Indians under Federal jurisdiction” as not being subject to State laws.⁷⁶ Variations of the phrase appeared elsewhere, as well. In a memorandum describing the draft IRA’s purpose and operation, Commissioner Collier stated that under the bill, the affairs of chartered Indian communities would “continue to be, as they are now, *subject to* Federal jurisdiction rather than State jurisdiction.”⁷⁷ Commissioner Collier elsewhere referred to various western tribes that occupied “millions of contiguous acres, tribally owned and *under* exclusive Federal jurisdiction.”⁷⁸ Assistant Solicitor Charles Fahy, who would later become Solicitor General of the United States,⁷⁹ described the constitutional authority to regulate commerce with the Indian tribes as being “*within* the Federal jurisdiction and not with the States’ jurisdiction.”⁸⁰

⁶⁹ *Id.* at 266.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* at 266.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* Nevertheless, Senator O’Mahoney did not understand why the Act’s benefits should not be extended “if they are living as Catawba Indians.”

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Id.* at 231.

⁷⁵ *Id.* at 266.

⁷⁶ H. Hrgs. at 337 (statement of John Steere, President, Indian Rights Association) (n.d.).

⁷⁷ *Id.* at 25 (Memorandum from Commissioner John Collier, *The Purpose and Operation of the Wheeler-Howard Indian Rights Bill* (S. 2755; H.R. 7902) (Feb. 19, 1934) (emphasis added)).

⁷⁸ *Id.* at 184 (statement of Commissioner Collier) (Apr. 8, 1934).

⁷⁹ Assistant Solicitor Fahy served as Solicitor General of the United States from 1941 to 1945. *See* <https://www.justice.gov/osg/bio/charles-fahy>.

⁸⁰ *Id.* at 319 (statement of Assistant Solicitor Charles Fahy).

These uses of “federal jurisdiction” in the governmental and administrative senses stand alongside its use throughout the legislative history in relation to courts specifically.

The IRA’s legislative history elsewhere shows that Commissioner Collier distinguished between Congress’s plenary authority generally and its application to tribes in particular contexts. He noted that Congress had delegated “most of its plenary authority to the Interior Department or the Bureau of Indian Affairs,” which he further described as “clothed with the plenary power.”⁸¹ But in turning to the draft bill’s aim of allowing tribes to take responsibility for their own affairs, Commissioner Collier referred to the “absolute authority” of the Department by reference to “its rules and regulations,” to which the Indians were subjected.⁸² Indeed, even before 1934, the Department routinely used the term “jurisdiction” to refer to the administrative units of the OIA having direct supervision of Indians.⁸³

Construing “jurisdiction” as meaning governmental supervision and administration is further consistent with the term’s prior use by the federal government. In 1832, for example, the United States by treaty assured the Creek Indians that they would be allowed to govern themselves free of the laws of any State or Territory, “so far as may be compatible with the general jurisdiction” of Congress over the Indians.⁸⁴ In *The Cherokee Tobacco* cases, the Supreme Court considered the conflict between subsequent Congressional acts and “[t]reaties with Indian nations within the jurisdiction of the United States.”⁸⁵ In considering the 14th Amendment’s application to Indians, the Supreme Court in *Elk v. Wilkins* also construed the Constitutional phrase, “subject to the jurisdiction of the United States,” in the sense of governmental authority:⁸⁶

The evident meaning of these last words is, not merely subject in some respect or degree to the jurisdiction of the United States, but completely subject to their political jurisdiction, and owing them direct and immediate allegiance.⁸⁷

⁸¹ *Id.* at 37 (statement of Commissioner Collier) (Feb. 22, 1934).

⁸² *Ibid.* at 37 (statement of Commissioner Collier) (Feb. 22, 1934).

⁸³ *See, e.g.*, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Circ. No. 1538, Annual Report and Census, 1919 (May 7, 1919) (directing Indian agents to enumerate the Indians residing at their agency, with a separate report to be made of agency “under [the agent’s] jurisdiction”); Circ. No. 3011, Statement of New Indian Service Policies (Jul. 14, 1934) (discussing organization and operation of Central Office related to “jurisdiction administrations,” *i.e.*, field operations); ARCIA for 1900 at 22 (noting lack of “jurisdiction” over New York Indian students); *id.* at 103 (reporting on matters “within” jurisdiction of Special Indian Agent in the Indian Territory); *id.* at 396 (describing reservations and villages covered by jurisdiction of Puyallup Consolidated Agency); MERIAM REPORT at 140-41 (“[W]hat strikes the careful observer in visiting Indian jurisdictions is not their uniformity, but their diversity... Because of this diversity, it seems imperative to recommend that a distinctive program and policy be adopted for each jurisdiction, especially fitted to its needs.”); Sen. Hrgs. at 282-98 (collecting various comments and opinions on the Wheeler-Howard Bill from tribes from different OIA “jurisdictions”).

⁸⁴ Treaty of March 24, 1832, art. XIV, 7 Stat. 366, 368. *See also* Act of May 8, 1906, 34 Stat. 182 (lands allotted to Indians in trust or restricted status to remain “subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States” until issuance of fee-simple patents).

⁸⁵ *The Cherokee Tobacco*, 78 U.S. 616, 621 (1870). The Court further held that the consequences of such conflicts give rise to political questions “beyond the sphere of judicial cognizance.” *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Elk v. Wilkins*, 112 U.S. 94, 102 (1884). *See also* *United States v. Ramsay*, 271 U.S. 470 (1926) (the conferring of citizenship does not make Indians subject to laws of the states).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

The terms of Category 1 suggest that the phrase “under federal jurisdiction” should not be interpreted to refer to the outer limits of Congress’s plenary authority, since it could encompass tribes that existed in an anthropological sense but with whom the federal government had never exercised any relationship. Such a result would be inconsistent with the Department’s understanding of “recognized Indian tribe” at the time, discussed below, as referring to a tribe with whom the United States had clearly dealt on a more or less sovereign-to-sovereign basis or for whom the federal government had clearly acknowledged a trust responsibility.

If “under federal jurisdiction” is understood to refer to the application and administration of the federal government’s plenary authority over Indians, then the complete phrase “now under federal jurisdiction” can further be seen as resolving the tension between Commissioner Collier’s desire that the IRA include Indians “[w]ithout regard to whether or not [they are] now under [federal] supervision” and the Senate Committee’s concern to limit the Act’s coverage to Indian wards “taken care of at the present time.”⁸⁸

C. The Meaning of the Phrase “Recognized Indian Tribe.”

Despite suggesting that the term “recognized” meant something different in 1934 than it did in the 1970s, Sol. Op. M-37029 had appeared to use these historically distinct concepts interchangeably. And while today’s concept of “federal recognition” merges the cognitive sense of “recognition” and the political-legal sense of “jurisdiction,” as *Carcieri* makes clear, the issue is what Congress meant in 1934, not how the concepts later evolved.⁸⁹ Congress’s authority to recognize Indian tribes flows from its plenary authority over Indian affairs.⁹⁰ Early in this country’s history, Congress charged the Secretary and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs with responsibility for managing Indian affairs and implementing general statutes enacted for the benefit of Indians.⁹¹ Because Congress has not generally defined “Indian,”⁹² it left it to the

⁸⁸ Sen. Hrgs. at 79-80, 263. The district court in *Grand Ronde* noted these contradictory views. *Grande Ronde*, 75 F.Supp.3d at 399-400. Such views were expressed while discussing drafts of the IRA that did not include the phrase “now under federal jurisdiction.”

⁸⁹ M-37029 at 8, n. 57 (citing *Director, Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs v. Greenwich Collieries*, 512 U.S. 267, 272 (1994) (in the absence of a statutory definition of a term, the court’s “task is to construe it in accord with its ordinary or natural meaning.”); *id.* at 275 (the court “presume[s] Congress intended the phrase [containing a legal term] to have the meaning generally accepted in the legal community at the time of enactment.”)).

⁹⁰ *United States v. Wheeler*, 435 U.S. 313, 319 (1978) (citing *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock*, 187 U.S. 553, 565 (1903) (“Plenary authority over the tribal relations of the Indians has been exercised by Congress from the beginning, and the power has always been deemed a political one, not subject to be controlled by the judicial department of the government.”)).

⁹¹ 25 U.S.C. § 2 (charging Commissioner of Indian Affairs with management of all Indian affairs and all matters arising out of Indian relations); 43 U.S.C. § 1457 (charging Secretary with supervision of public business relating to Indians); 25 U.S.C. § 9 (authorizing President to prescribe regulations for carrying into effect the provisions of any act relating to Indian affairs). *See also* H. Hrgs. at 37 (remarks of Commissioner Collier) (“Congress through a long series of acts has delegated most of its plenary authority to the Interior Department or the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which as instrumentalities of Congress are clothed with the plenary power, an absolutist power”); *id.* at 51 (Memorandum of Commissioner John Collier) (providing statutory examples of “the broad discretionary powers conferred by Congress on administrative officers of the Government”).

⁹² U.S. Dept. of Interior, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, “Indian Wardship,” Circular No. 2958 (Oct. 28, 1933) (“No statutory definition seems to exist of what constitutes an Indian or of what Indians are wards of the Government.”); *Eligibility of Non-enrolled Indians for Services and Benefits under the Indian Reorganization Act*, Memorandum from Thomas W. Fredericks, Associate Solicitor, Indian Affairs, to Acting Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Dec. 4, 1978) (“there exists no universal definition of “Indian”). *See also* Letter from Kent Frizzell,

Secretary to determine to whom such statutes apply.⁹³ “Recognition” generally is a political question to which the courts ordinarily defer.⁹⁴

Sol. Op. M-37029 had understood that a tribe could be considered “recognized” for purposes of the IRA so long as it is “federally recognized” when the Act is applied.⁹⁵ Arguendo, M-37029 concluded that even if “now” did modify “recognized Indian tribe,” the meaning of “recognized” was ambiguous.⁹⁶ It described the term as having been used historically in two senses: a “cognitive” or “quasi-anthropological” sense indicating that federal officials “knew” or “realized” that a tribe existed; and a political-legal sense connoting “that a tribe is a governmental entity comprised of Indians and that the entity has a unique political relationship with the United States.”⁹⁷ The Solicitor concluded that this interpretation departs from the Department’s prior, long-held understanding of “recognition” as referring to actions taken by appropriate federal officials toward a tribe with whom the United States clearly dealt on a more-or-less sovereign-to-sovereign basis or for whom the federal government had clearly acknowledged a trust responsibility in or before 1934.

1. Ordinary Meaning.

The 1935 edition of WEBSTER’S NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY first defines the verb “to recognize” as meaning “to know again (...) to recover or recall knowledge of.”⁹⁸ Most of the remaining entries focus on the legal or political meanings of the verb. These include, “To avow knowledge of (...) to admit with a formal acknowledgment; as, to *recognize* an obligation; to *recognize* a consul”; Or, “To acknowledge formally (...); specif: (...) To acknowledge by admitting to an associated or privileged status.” And, “To acknowledge the independence of (...) a community (...) by express declaration or by any overt act sufficiently indicating the intention

Acting Secretary of the Interior, to David H. Getches, Esq. on behalf of the Stillaguamish Tribe, at 8-9 (Oct. 27, 1976) (suggesting that “recognized Indian tribe” in IRA § 19 refers to tribes that were “administratively recognized” in 1934).

⁹³ *Secretary’s Authority to Extend Federal Recognition to Indian Tribes*, Memorandum from Reid P. Chambers, Associate Solicitor, Indian Affairs to Solicitor Kent Frizzell, at 1 (Aug. 20, 1974) (hereafter “Chambers Memo”) (“the Secretary, in carrying out Congress’s plan, must first determine, i.e., recognize, to whom [a statute] applies”); Letter from LaFollette Butler, Acting Dep. Comm. of Indian Affairs to Sen. Henry M. Jackson, Chair, Senate at 5 (Jun. 7, 1974) (hereafter “Butler Letter”) (same); *Dobbs v. United States*, 33 Ct. Cl. 308, 315-16 (1898) (recognition may be effected “by those officers of the Government whose duty it was to deal with and report the condition of the Indians to the executive branch of the Government”).

⁹⁴ *Baker v. Carr*, 369 U.S. 186, 216 (1962) (citing *United States v. Holliday*, 70 U.S. 407, 419 (1865) (deferring to decisions by the Secretary and Commissioner of Indian Affairs to recognize Indians as a tribe as political questions)). See also Memorandum from Alan K. Palmer, Acting Associate Solicitor, Indian Affairs, to Solicitor, Federal “Recognition” of Indian Tribes at 2-6 (Jul. 17, 1975) (hereafter “Palmer Memorandum”).

⁹⁵ M-37029 at 25 (interpreting IRA as not requiring determination that a tribal applicant was “a recognized Indian tribe” in 1934).

⁹⁶ *Id.* at 24 (“To the extent that the courts (contrary to the views expressed here) deem the term ‘recognized Indian tribe’ in the IRA to require recognition in 1934”).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* M-37029 also notes that the political-legal sense of “recognized Indian tribe” evolved into the modern concept of “federal recognition” or “federal acknowledgment” by the 1970s, when the Department’s administrative acknowledgment procedures were developed. See 43 Fed. Reg. 39,361 (Aug. 24, 1978). Originally classified at Part 54 of Title 25 of the Code of Federal Regulations, the Department’s administrative acknowledgment procedures are today classified as Part 83. 47 Fed. Reg. 13326 (Mar. 30, 1982).

⁹⁸ WEBSTER’S INTERNATIONAL NEW DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (2d ed.) (1935), entry for “recognize” (v.t.).

to recognize.”⁹⁹ These political-legal understandings seem consistent with how Congress used the term elsewhere in the IRA. Section 11, for example, authorizes federal appropriations for loans to Indians for tuition and expenses in “recognized vocational and trade schools.”¹⁰⁰ While neither the Act nor its legislative history provide further explanation, the context strongly suggests that the phrase “recognized vocational and trade schools” refers to those formally certified or verified as such by an appropriate official.

2. Legislative History.

The IRA’s legislative history supports interpreting “recognized Indian tribe” in Category 1 in the political-legal sense.¹⁰¹ Commissioner Collier, himself a “principal author” of the IRA,¹⁰² also used the term “recognized” in the political-legal sense in explaining how some American courts had “recognized” tribal customary marriage and divorce.¹⁰³ The IRA’s legislative history further suggests that Congress did not intend “recognized Indian tribe” to be understood in a cognitive, quasi-anthropological sense. The concerns expressed by some members of the Senate Committee for the ambiguous and potentially broad *scope* of the phrase arguably prompted Commissioner Collier to suggest inserting “now under federal jurisdiction” in Category 1 as a limiting phrase.¹⁰⁴

As originally drafted, Category 1 referred only to “recognized” Indian tribes, leaving unclear whether it was used in a cognitive or in a political-legal sense. This ambiguity appears to have created uncertainty over Category 1’s scope and its overlap with Section 19’s other definitions of “Indian,” which appear to have led Congress to insert the limiting phrase “now under federal jurisdiction.” As noted above, we interpret “now under federal jurisdiction” as modifying “recognized Indian tribe” and as limiting Category 1’s scope. By doing so, “now under federal jurisdiction” may be construed as disambiguating “recognized Indian tribe” by clarifying its use in a political-legal sense.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, entries 2, 3.c, 5. See also *id.*, entry for “acknowledge” (v.t.) “2. To own or recognize in a particular character or relationship; to admit the claims or authority of; to recognize.”

¹⁰⁰ The phrase “recognized Indian tribe” appeared in what was then section 9 of the committee print considered by the Senate Committee on May 17, 1934. Sen. Hrgs. at 232, 242. Section 9 provided the right to organize under a constitution to “[a]ny recognized Indian tribe.” It was later amended to read “[a]ny Indian tribe, or tribes” before ultimate enactment as Section 16 of the IRA. 25 U.S.C. § 5123. The term “recognized” also appeared several times in the bill originally introduced as H.R. 7902. In three it was used in legal-political sense. H.R. 7902, 73d Cong. (as introduced Feb. 12, 1934), tit. I, § 4(j) (requiring chartered communities to be “recognized as successor to any existing political powers...”); tit. II, § 1 (training for Indians in institutions “of recognized standing”); tit. IV, § 10 (Constitutional procedural rights to be “recognized and observed” in courts of Indian offenses). H.R. 7902, tit. I, § 13(b) used the expression “recognized Indian tribe” in defining “Indian.”

¹⁰¹ See, e.g., Sen. Hrgs. at 263 (remarks of Senator Thomas of Oklahoma) (discussing prior Administration’s policy “not to recognize Indians except those already under [Indian Office] authority”); *id.* at 69 (remarks of Commissioner Collier) (tribal customary marriages and divorces “recognized” by courts nationally). Representative William W. Hastings of Oklahoma criticized an early draft definition of “tribe” on the grounds it would allow chartered communities to be “recognized as a tribe” and to exercise tribal powers under section 16 and section 17 of the IRA. See *id.* at 308.

¹⁰² *Carciere*, 555 U.S. at 390, n. 4 (citing *United States v. Mitchell*, 463 U.S. 206, 221, n. 21 (1983)).

¹⁰³ Sen. Hrgs. at 69 (remarks of Commissioner Collier) (Apr. 26, 1934). On at least one occasion, however, Collier appeared to rely on the cognitive sense in referring to “recognized” tribes or bands *not* under federal supervision. Sen. Hrgs. at 80 (remarks of Commissioner Collier) (Apr. 26, 1934).

¹⁰⁴ Justice Breyer concluded that Congress added “now under federal jurisdiction” to Category 1 “believing it definitively resolved a specific underlying difficulty.” *Carciere*, 555 U.S. at 397-98 (Breyer, J., concurring).

3. Administrative Understandings.

Compelling support for interpreting the term “recognized” in the political-legal sense is found in the views of Department officials expressed around the time of the IRA’s enactment and early implementation. Assistant Solicitor Cohen discussed the issue in the Department’s HANDBOOK OF FEDERAL INDIAN LAW (“HANDBOOK”), which he prepared around the time of the IRA’s enactment. The HANDBOOK’s relevant passages discuss ambiguities in the meaning of the term “tribe.”¹⁰⁵ Assistant Solicitor Cohen explains that the term “tribe” may be understood in both an ethnological and a political-legal sense.¹⁰⁶ The former denotes a unique linguistic or cultural community. By contrast, the political-legal sense refers to ethnological groups “recognized as single tribes for administrative and political purposes” and to single ethnological groups considered as a number of independent tribes “in the political sense.”¹⁰⁷ This suggests that while the term “tribe,” standing alone, could be interpreted in a cognitive sense, as used in the phrase “recognized Indian tribe” it would have been understood in a political-legal sense, which presumes the existence of an ethnological group.¹⁰⁸

Less than a year after the IRA’s enactment, Commissioner Collier further explained that “recognized tribe” meant a tribe “with which the government at one time or another has had a treaty or agreement or those for whom reservations or lands have been provided and over whom the government exercises supervision through an official representative.”¹⁰⁹ Addressing the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act of 1936 (“OIWA”), Solicitor Nathan Margold opined that because tribes may “pass out of existence as such in the course of time, the word “recognized” as used in the [OIWA] should be read as requiring more than “past existence as a tribe and its historical recognition as such,” but “recognition” of a currently existing group’s activities “by specific actions of the Indian Office, the Department, or by Congress.”¹¹⁰

The Department maintained similar understandings of the term “recognized” in the decades that followed. In a 1980 memorandum assessing the eligibility of the Stillaguamish Tribe for IRA trust-land acquisitions,¹¹¹ Hans Walker, Jr., Associate Solicitor for Indian Affairs, distinguished the modern concept of formal “federal recognition” (or “federal acknowledgment”) from the political-legal sense of “recognized” as used in Category 1 in concluding that “formal acknowledgment in 1934” is not a prerequisite for trust-land acquisitions under the IRA, “so

¹⁰⁵ Cohen 1942 at 268.

¹⁰⁶ Cohen separately discussed how the term “Indian” itself could be used in an “ethnological or in a legal sense,” noting that a person’s legal status as an “Indian” depended on genealogical and social factors. Cohen 1942 at 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Id.* at 268 (emphases added).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* at 268 (validity of congressional and administrative actions depend upon the [historical, ethnological] existence of tribes); *United States v. Sandoval*, 231 U.S. 28 (1913) (Congress may not arbitrarily bring a community or group of people within the range of its plenary authority over Indian affairs). *See also* 25 C.F.R. Part 83 (establishing mandatory criteria for determining whether a group is an Indian tribe eligible for special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians).

¹⁰⁹ Letter, Commissioner John Collier to Ben C. Shawanesee (Apr. 24, 1935).

¹¹⁰ I OP. SOL. INT. 864 (Memorandum from Solicitor Nathan M. Margold to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Oklahoma – Recognized Tribes (Dec. 13, 1938)); Cohen 1942 at 271.

¹¹¹ Memorandum from Hans Walker, Jr., Associate Solicitor, Indian Affairs, to Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs, Request for Reconsideration of Decision Not to Take Land in Trust for the Stillaguamish Tribe at 1 (Oct. 1, 1980) (hereafter “Stillaguamish Memo”).

long as the group meets the [IRA's] other definitional requirements."¹¹² These included that the tribe have been "recognized" in 1934. Associate Solicitor Walker construed "recognized" as referring to tribes with whom the United States had had "a continuing course of dealings or some legal obligation in 1934 *whether or not that obligation was acknowledged at that time.*"¹¹³ Associate Solicitor Walker then noted the Senate Committee's concerns for the potential breadth of "recognized Indian tribe." He concluded that Congress intended to exclude some groups that might be considered Indians in a cultural or governmental sense, but not "any Indians to whom the Federal Government had *already* assumed obligations."¹¹⁴ Implicitly construing the phrase "now under federal jurisdiction" to modify "recognized Indian tribe," Associate Solicitor Walker found it "clear" that Category 1 "requires that some type of obligation or extension of services to a tribe must have existed in 1934."¹¹⁵ As already noted, in the case of the Stillaguamish Tribe, such obligations were established by the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott and remained in effect in 1934.¹¹⁶

Associate Solicitor Walker's views in 1980 were consistent with the conclusions reached by the Solicitor's Office in the mid-1970s following its assessment of how the federal government had historically understood the term "recognition." This assessment was begun under Reid Peyton Chambers, Associate Solicitor for Indian Affairs, and offers insight into how Congress and the Department understood "recognition" at the time the Act was passed. In fact, it was this historical review of "recognition" that contributed to the development of the Department's federal acknowledgment procedures.¹¹⁷

Throughout the United States' early history, Indian treaties were negotiated by the President and ratified by the Senate pursuant to the Treaty Clause.¹¹⁸ In 1871, Congress enacted legislation providing that no tribe within the territory of the United States could thereafter be "acknowledged or recognized" as an "independent nation, tribe, or power" with whom the United States could contract by treaty.¹¹⁹ Behind the act lay the view that though Indian tribes were still "recognized as distinct political communities," they were "wards" in a condition of dependency who were "subject to the paramount authority of the United States."¹²⁰ While the

¹¹² *Id.* at 1 (emphasis added). Justice Breyer's concurring opinion in *Carciere* draws on Associate Solicitor Walker's analysis in the Stillaguamish Memo. See *Carciere*, 555 U.S. at 397-98 (Breyer, J., concurring).

¹¹³ *Id.* at 2 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁴ *Id.* at 4 (emphasis added). This is consistent with Justice Breyer's concurring view in *Carciere*.

¹¹⁵ *Id.* at 6. In the case of the Stillaguamish Tribe, such obligations arose in 1855 through the Treaty of Point Elliott, and they remained in effect in 1934.

¹¹⁶ Justice Breyer's concurring opinion in *Carciere* draws on the analysis in the Stillaguamish Memo. See *Carciere*, 555 U.S. at 397-98 (Breyer, J., concurring).

¹¹⁷ 25 C.F.R. Part 83.

¹¹⁸ U.S. CONST., art. II, § 2, cl. 2. See generally Cohen 1942 at 46-67.

¹¹⁹ Act of March 3, 1871, c. 120, § 1, 16 Stat. 544, 566. Section 3 of the same Act prohibited further contracts or agreements with any tribe of Indians or individual Indian not a citizen of the United States related to their lands unless in writing and approved by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of the Interior. *Id.*, § 3, 16 Stat. 570-71.

¹²⁰ *Mille Lac Band of Chippewas v. United States*, 46 Ct. Cl. 424, 441 (1911).

question of “recognition” remained one for the political branches,¹²¹ the contexts within which it arose expanded with the United States’ obligations as guardian.¹²²

After the close of the termination era in the early 1960s, during which the federal government had “endeavored to terminate its supervisory responsibilities for Indian tribes,”¹²³ Indian groups that the Department did not otherwise consider “recognized” began to seek services and benefits from the federal government. The most notable of these claims were aboriginal land claims under the Nonintercourse Act,¹²⁴ treaty fishing-rights claims by descendants of treaty signatories;¹²⁵ and requests to the BIA for benefits from groups of Indians for which no government-to-government relationship existed,¹²⁶ which included tribes previously recognized and seeking restoration or reaffirmation of their status.¹²⁷ At around this same time, Congress began a critical historical review of the federal government’s conduct of its special legal relationship with American Indians.¹²⁸ In January 1975, it found that federal Indian policies had “shifted and changed” across administrations “without apparent rational design,”¹²⁹ and that there had been no “general comprehensive review of conduct of Indian affairs” or its “many problems and issues” since 1928, before the IRA’s enactment.¹³⁰ Finding it imperative to do so,¹³¹ Congress established the American Indian Policy Review Commission¹³² to prepare an

¹²¹ *United States v. Holliday*, 70 U.S. 407, 419 (1865).

¹²² See Cohen 1942 at 17-19 (discussing contemporaneous views on the conflicts between sovereignty and wardship). Compare, e.g., *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S. 515 (1832) with *United States v. Kagama*, 118 U. S. 375 (1886).

¹²³ *South Carolina v. Catawba Indian Tribe, Inc.*, 476 U.S. 498, 503 (1986). See also Cohen 2012 at § 1.06 (describing history and implementation of termination policy). During the termination era, roughly beginning in 1953 and ending in the mid-1960s, Congress enacted legislation ending federal recognition of more than 100 tribes and bands in eight states. Michael C. Walsh, *Terminating the Indian Termination Policy*, 35 STAN. L. REV. 1181, 1186 (1983). Congress has since restored federal recognition to some terminated tribes. See Cohen 2012 at § 3.02[8][c], n. 246 (listing examples).

¹²⁴ See, e.g., *Joint Tribal Council of Passamaquoddy Tribe v. Morton*, 388 F. Supp. 649, 655 (D. Me.), *aff’d sub nom. Joint Tribal Council of the Passamaquoddy Tribe v. Morton*, 528 F.2d 370 (1st Cir. 1975) (Nonintercourse Act claim by unrecognized tribe in Maine); *Mashpee Tribe v. Town of Mashpee*, 447 F. Supp. 940, 944 (D. Mass. 1978), *aff’d sub nom. Mashpee Tribe v. New Seabury Corp.*, 592 F.2d 575 (1st Cir. 1979) (Nonintercourse Act claim by unrecognized tribe in Massachusetts).

¹²⁵ *United States v. State of Wash.*, 384 F. Supp. 312, 348 (W.D. Wash. 1974), *aff’d and remanded*, 520 F.2d 676 (9th Cir. 1975) (treaty fishing rights of unrecognized tribes in Washington State)

¹²⁶ AMERICAN INDIAN POLICY REVIEW COMMISSION, *Final Report, Vol. I* [Committee Print] at 462 (GPO 1977) (hereafter “AIPRC Final Report”) (“A number of [unrecognized] Indian tribes are seeking to formalize relationships with the United States today but there is no available process for such actions.”). See also TASK FORCE NO. 10 ON TERMINATED AND NONFEDERALLY RECOGNIZED INDIANS, *Final Report to the American Indian Policy Review Commission* (GPO 1976) (hereafter “Report of Task Force Ten”).

¹²⁷ Kirsten Matoy Carlson, *Making Strategic Choices: How and Why Indian Groups Advocated for Federal Recognition from 1977 to 2012*, 51 LAW & SOC’Y REV. 930 (2017).

¹²⁸ Pub. L. No. 93-580, 88 Stat. 1910 (Jan. 2, 1975), *as amended*, (hereafter “AIPRC Act”), *codified at* 25 U.S.C. § 174 note.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* Commissioner John Collier raised this same issue in hearings on the draft IRA. See H. Hrgs. at 37. Noting that Congress had delegated most of its plenary authority to the Department or BIA, which Collier described as “instrumentalities of Congress...clothed with the plenary power.” Being subject to the Department’s authority and its rules and regulations meant that while one administration might take a course “to bestow rights upon the Indians and to allow them to organize and allow them to take over their legal affairs in some self-governing scheme,” a successor administration “would be completely empowered to revoke the entire grant.”

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* (citing MERIAM REPORT).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² AIRPC Act, § 1(a).

investigation and study of Indian affairs, including “an examination of the statutes and procedures for granting Federal recognition and extending services to Indian communities.”¹³³ It was against this backdrop that the Department undertook its own review of the history and meaning of “recognition.”¹³⁴

The Palmer Memorandum

In July 1975, the acting Associate Solicitor for Indian Affairs prepared a 28-page memorandum on “Federal ‘Recognition’ of Indian Tribes” (the “Palmer Memorandum”).¹³⁵ Among other things, it examined the historical meaning of “recognition” in federal law, and of the Secretary’s authority to “recognize” unrecognized groups. After surveying statutes and case law before and after the IRA’s enactment, as well as its early implementation by the Department, the memorandum notes that “the entire concept is in fact quite murky.”¹³⁶ The Palmer Memorandum finds that the case law lacked a coherent distinction between “tribal existence and tribal recognition,” and that clear standards or procedures for recognition had never been established by statute.¹³⁷ It further finds there to be a “consistent ambiguity” over whether formal recognition consisted of an assessment “of *past* governmental action” – the approach “articulated in the cases and [Departmental] memoranda” – or whether it “included authority to take such actions *in the first instance*.”¹³⁸ Despite these ambiguities, the Palmer Memorandum concludes that the concept of “recognition” could not be dispensed with, as it had become an accepted part of Indian law.¹³⁹

Indirectly addressing the two senses of the term “tribe” described above, the Palmer Memorandum found that before the IRA, the concept of “recognition” was often indistinguishable from the question of tribal existence,¹⁴⁰ and was linked with the treaty-making powers of the Executive and Legislative branches, for which reason it was likened to diplomatic recognition of foreign governments.¹⁴¹ Though treaties remained a “prime indicia” of political “recognition,”¹⁴² the memorandum noted that other evidence could include Congressional

¹³³ *Id.*, § 2(3).

¹³⁴ *See, e.g.*, Letter from LaFollette Butler, Acting Dep. Comm. of Indian Affairs to Sen. Henry M. Jackson, Chair, Senate (Jun. 7, 1974) (hereafter “Butler Letter”) (describing authority for recognizing tribes since 1954); Memorandum from Reid P. Chambers, Associate Solicitor, Indian Affairs to Solicitor Kent Frizzell, Secretary’s Authority to Extend Federal Recognition to Indian Tribes (Aug. 20, 1974) (hereafter “Chambers Memo”) (discussing Secretary’s authority to recognize the Stillaguamish Tribe); Memorandum from Alan K. Palmer, Acting Associate Solicitor, Indian Affairs, to Solicitor, Federal “Recognition” of Indian Tribes (Jul. 17, 1975) (hereafter “Palmer Memo”).

¹³⁵ Associate Solicitor Reid P. Chambers approved the Palmer Memo in draft form. *Ibid.* The Palmer Memo came on the heels of earlier consideration by the Department of the Secretary’s authority to acknowledge tribes.

¹³⁶ Palmer Memo at 23.

¹³⁷ *Id.* at 23-24.

¹³⁸ *Id.* at 24. The memorandum concluded that the former question necessarily implied the latter.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* at 24.

¹⁴⁰ The Palmer Memo noted that based on the political question doctrine, the courts rarely looked behind a “recognition” decision to determine questions of tribal existence *per se*. *Id.* at 14.

¹⁴¹ *Id.* at 13. *See also* Cohen 1942 at 12 (describing origin of Indian Service as “diplomatic service handling negotiations between the United States and Indian nations and tribes”).

¹⁴² *Id.* at 3.

recognition by non-treaty means and administrative actions fulfilling statutory responsibilities toward Indians as “domestic dependent nations,”¹⁴³ including the provision of trust services.¹⁴⁴ Having noted the term’s ambiguity and its political and administrative uses, the Palmer Memorandum then surveyed the case law to identify “indicia of congressional and executive recognition.”¹⁴⁵ It describes these indicia as including both federal actions taken toward a tribe with whom the United States dealt on a “more or less sovereign-to-sovereign basis,” as well as actions that “clearly acknowledged a trust responsibility”¹⁴⁶ toward a tribe, consistent with the evolution of federal Indian policy.¹⁴⁷

The indicia identified by the Solicitor’s Office in 1975 as evidencing “recognition” in a political-legal sense included the following: treaties;¹⁴⁸ the establishment of reservations; and the treatment of a tribe as having collective rights in land, even if not denominated a “tribe.”¹⁴⁹ Specific indicia of Congressional “recognition” included enactments specifically referring to a tribe as an existing entity; authorizing appropriations to be expended for the benefit of a tribe;¹⁵⁰ authorizing tribal funds to be held in the federal treasury; directing officials of the Government to exercise supervisory authority over a tribe; and prohibiting state taxation of a tribe. Specific indicia of Executive or administrative “recognition” before 1934 included the setting aside or

¹⁴³ *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. 1, 17 (1831). See also AIPRC Final Report at 462 (“Administrative actions by Federal officials and occasionally by military officers have sometimes laid a foundation for federal acknowledgment of a tribe’s rights.”); *Report of Task Force Ten* at 1660 (during Nixon Administration “federally recognized” included tribes recognized by treaty or statute and tribes treated as recognized “through a historical pattern of administrative action.”).

¹⁴⁴ Palmer Memo at 2; AIPRC Final Report at 111 (treaties but one method of dealing with tribes and treaty law generally applies to agreements, statutes, and Executive orders dealing with Indians, noting the trust relationship has been applied in numerous nontreaty situations). Many non-treaty tribes receive BIA services, just as some treaty-tribes receive no BIA services. AIPRC Final Report at 462; Terry Anderson & Kirke Kickingbird, *An Historical Perspective on the Issue of Federal Recognition and Non-Recognition*, Institute for the Development of Indian Law at 1 (1978). See also *Legal Status of the Indians-Validity of Indian Marriages*, 13 YALE L.J. 250, 251 (1904) (“The United States, however, continued to regard the Indians as nations and made treaties with them as such until 1871, when after an hundred years of the treaty making system of government a new departure was taken in governing them by acts of Congress.”).

¹⁴⁵ *Id.* at 2-14.

¹⁴⁶ *Id.* at 14.

¹⁴⁷ Having ratified no new treaties since 1868, ARCA 1872 at 83 (1872), Congress ended the practice of treaty-making in 1871, more than 60 years before the IRA’s enactment. See Act of March 3, 1871, ch. 120, § 1, 16 Stat. 566, *codified at* 25 U.S.C. § 71. This caused the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at the time to ask what would become of the rights of tribes with which the United States had not yet treated. ARCA 1872 at 83. As a practical matter, the end of treaty-making tipped the policy scales toward expanding the treatment of Indians as wards under federal guardianship, expanding the role of administrative officials in the management and implementation of Indian Affairs. Cohen 1942 at 17-19 (discussing contemporaneous views on the conflicts between sovereignty and wardship); *Brown v. United States*, 32 Ct. Cl. 432, 439 (1897) (“But since the Act 3d March, 1871 (16 Stat. L., 566, § 1), the Indian tribes have ceased to be treaty-making powers and have become simply the wards of the nation.”); *United States v. Kagama*, 118 U.S. 375, 382 (1886) (“But, after an experience of a hundred years of the treaty-making system of government, congress has determined upon a new departure,-to govern them by acts of congress. This is seen in the act of March 3, 1871...”).

¹⁴⁸ Butler Letter at 6; Palmer Memo at 3 (executed treaties a “prime indicia” of “federal recognition” of tribe as distinct political body).

¹⁴⁹ Butler Letter at 6 (citing Cohen 1942 at 271); Palmer Memo at 19.

¹⁵⁰ Butler Letter at 5; Palmer Memo at 6-8 (citing *United States v. Sandoval*, 231 U.S. 28, 39-40 (1913), *United States v. Nice*, 241 U.S. 591, 601 (1916), *United States v. Boylan*, 265 F. 165, 171 (2d Cir. 1920)); *id.* at 8-10 (citing *United States v. Nice*, 241 U.S. 591, 601 (1916); *Tully v. United States*, 32 Ct. Cl. 1 (1896) (recognition for purposes of Depredations Act by federal officers charged with responsibility for reporting thereon).

acquisition of lands for Indians by Executive order;¹⁵¹ the presence of an Indian agent on a reservation; denomination of a tribe in an Executive order;¹⁵² the establishment of schools and other service institutions for the benefit of a tribe; the supervision of tribal contracts; the establishment by the Department of an agency office or Superintendent for a tribe; the institution of suits on behalf of a tribe;¹⁵³ and the expenditure of funds appropriated for the use of particular Indian groups.

The Palmer Memorandum also considered the Department's early implementation of the IRA, when the Solicitor's Office was called upon to determine tribal eligibility for the Act. While this did not provide a "coherent body of clear legal principles," it showed that Department officials closely associated with the IRA's enactment believed that whether a tribe was "recognized" was "an administrative question" that the Department could determine.¹⁵⁴ In making such determinations, the Department looked to indicia established by federal courts.¹⁵⁵ There, indicia of Congressional recognition had primary importance, but in its absence, indicia of Executive action alone might suffice.¹⁵⁶ Early on, the factors the Department considered were "principally retrospective," reflecting a concern for "whether a particular tribe or band *had* been recognized, not whether it *should* be."¹⁵⁷ Because the Department had the authority to "recognize" a tribe for purposes of implementing the IRA, the absence of "formal" recognition in the past was "not deemed controlling" *if there were sufficient indicia* of governmental dealings with a tribe "on a sovereign or quasi-sovereign basis."¹⁵⁸ The manner in which the Department understood "recognition" before, in, and long-after 1934¹⁵⁹ supports the view that Congress and the Department understood "recognized" to refer to actions taken by federal officials with respect to a tribe for political or administrative purposes in or before 1934.

D. Construing the Expression "Recognized Indian Tribe Now Under Federal Jurisdiction" as a Whole.

Based on the interpretation above, the phrase "any recognized Indian tribe now under federal jurisdiction" as a whole should be interpreted as intended to limit the IRA's coverage to tribes who were brought under federal jurisdiction in or before 1934 by the actions of federal officials clearly dealing with the tribe on a more or less sovereign-to-sovereign basis or clearly acknowledging a trust responsibility, and who remained under federal authority in 1934.

¹⁵¹ Palmer Memo at 19 (citing Cohen 1942 at 271)); Butler letter at 4.

¹⁵² Palmer Memo at 19 (citing Cohen 1942 at 271).

¹⁵³ *Id.* at 6, 8 (citing *United States v. Sandoval*, 231 U.S. 28, 39-40 (1913), *United States v. Boylan*, 265 F. 165, 171 (2d Cir. 1920) (suit brought on behalf of Oneida Indians)).

¹⁵⁴ *Id.* at 18.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* (emphasis in original). See also Stillaguamish Memo at 2 (Category 1 includes "all groups which existed and as to which the United States had a continuing course of dealings or some legal obligation in 1934 whether or not that obligation was acknowledged at that time.").

¹⁵⁸ Palmer Memo at 18.

¹⁵⁹ See, e.g., Stillaguamish Memo. See also 25 C.F.R. § 83.12 (describing evidence to show "previous Federal acknowledgment" as including: treaty relations; denomination as a tribe in Congressional act or Executive Order; treatment by Federal government as having collective rights in lands or funds; and federally-held lands for collective ancestors).

Each phrase referred to a different aspect of a tribe’s trust relationship with the United States. Before and after 1934, the Department and the courts regularly used the term “recognized” to refer to *exercises* of federal authority over a tribe that initiated or continued a course of dealings with the tribe pursuant to Congress’ plenary authority. By contrast, the phrase “under federal jurisdiction” referred to the supervisory and administrative responsibilities of federal authorities toward a tribe thereby established. The entire phrase “any recognized Indian tribe now under federal jurisdiction” should therefore be interpreted to refer to recognized tribes for whom the United States maintained trust responsibilities in 1934.

Based on this understanding, the phrase “now under federal jurisdiction” can be seen to exclude two categories of tribe from Category 1. The first category consists of tribes never “recognized” by the United States in or before 1934. The second category consists of tribes who *were* “recognized” before 1934 but no longer remained under federal jurisdiction in 1934. This would include tribes who had absented themselves from the jurisdiction of the United States or had otherwise lost their jurisdictional status, for example, because of policies predicated on “the dissolution and elimination of tribal relations,” such as allotment and assimilation.¹⁶⁰ Though outside Category 1’s definition of “Indian,” Congress may later enact legislation recognizing and extending the IRA’s benefits to such tribes, as *Carciere* instructs.¹⁶¹ For purposes of the eligibility analysis, however, it is important to bear in mind that neither of these categories would include tribes who were “recognized” and for whom the United States maintained trust responsibilities in 1934, despite the federal government’s neglect of those responsibilities.¹⁶²

III. ANALYSIS

A. Procedure for Determining Eligibility.

As noted, the Solicitor’s Guidance provides a four-step process to determine whether a tribe falls within Category 1 of Section 19.¹⁶³ It is not, however, necessary to proceed through each step of the procedure for every fee-to-trust application.¹⁶⁴ The Solicitor’s Guidance identifies forms of evidence that presumptively satisfy each of the first three steps.¹⁶⁵ Only in the absence of

¹⁶⁰ *Hackford v. Babbitt*, 14 F.3d 1457, 1459 (10th Cir. 1994) (“The “ultimate purpose of the [Indian General Allotment Act] was] to abrogate the Indian tribal organization, to abolish the reservation system and to place the Indians on an equal footing with other citizens of the country.”); *see also Montana v. United States*, 450 U.S. 544, 559 (1981) (citing 11 CONG. REC. 779 (Sen. Vest), 782 (Sen. Coke), 783–784 (Sen. Saunders), 875 (Sens. Morgan and Hoar), 881 (Sen. Brown), 905 (Sen. Butler), 939 (Sen. Teller), 1003 (Sen. Morgan), 1028 (Sen. Hoar), 1064, 1065 (Sen. Plumb), 1067 (Sen. Williams) (1881); SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR ANN. REP. 1885 at 25–28; SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR ANN. REP. 1886 at 4; ARCIA 1887 at IV–X; SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR ANN. REP. 1888 at XXIX–XXXII; ARCIA 1889 at 3–4; ARCIA 1890 at VI, XXXIX; ARCIA 1891 at 3–9, 26; ARCIA 1892 at 5; SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR ANN. REP. 1894 at IV). *See also Cohen* 1942 at 272 (“Given adequate evidence of the existence of a tribe during some period in the remote or recent past, the question may always be raised: Has the existence of this tribe been terminated in some way?”).

¹⁶¹ *Carciere*, 555 U.S. at 392, n. 6 (listing statutes by which Congress expanded the Secretary’s authority to acquire land in trust to tribes not necessarily encompassed by Section 19).

¹⁶² *See, e.g., Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa & Chippewa Indians v. Office of U.S. Atty. for W. Div. of Michigan*, 198 F. Supp. 2d 920, 934 (W.D. Mich. 2002), *aff’d*, 369 F.3d 960 (6th Cir. 2004) (improper termination of treaty-tribe’s status before 1934).

¹⁶³ Solicitor’s Guidance at 1.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

presumptive evidence should the inquiry proceed to Step Four, which requires the Department to weigh the totality of an applicant tribe's evidence.¹⁶⁶ The Tribe, as explained below, provided dispositive evidence under Step Two that it was "under federal jurisdiction" in 1934 and therefore eligible for the benefits of Section 5 of the IRA.

B. Dispositive Evidence of Federal Jurisdiction in 1934.

Having identified no separate statutory authority making the IRA applicable to the Tribe under Step One, our analysis proceeds to Step Two of the eligibility inquiry, which looks to whether any evidence unambiguously demonstrates that the Tribe was under federal jurisdiction in 1934.¹⁶⁷ Certain types of federal actions may constitute dispositive evidence of federal supervisory or administrative authority over Indians in 1934. These are: elections conducted by the Department pursuant to Section 18 of the IRA; approval by the Secretary of a constitution following an election held pursuant to Section 16 of the IRA; issuance of a charter of incorporation following a petition submitted pursuant to Section 17 of the IRA; adjudicated treaty rights; inclusion in 1934 on the Department's Indian Population Report; and land acquisitions by the United States for groups of Indians in the years leading up to 1934.¹⁶⁸ Where any of these forms of evidence exist, then the Solicitor's Office may consider the tribe to have been under federal jurisdiction in 1934 and eligible under Category 1.¹⁶⁹

1. Laytonville Rancheria IRA Section 18 Election.

The IRA is a statute of general applicability, but includes a provision that would render it inapplicable.¹⁷⁰ Section 18, as amended, directs the Secretary to conduct elections to allow Indians residing on a reservation to vote to reject the imposition of the Act.¹⁷¹ In order for the Secretary to conclude that a reservation was eligible for an election, a determination had to be made that the relevant Indians satisfied one of the IRA's definitions of "Indian." The calling of a Section 18 election confirmed the Secretary's finding that the voters were "Indians" within the meaning of Section 19, as such an election is "certainly an acknowledgment of federal power and responsibility (*i.e.*, federal jurisdiction)" toward the Indians for whom the election was called.¹⁷² From 1934-1936, the Department conducted 258 Section 18 elections,¹⁷³ the results of which it compiled by the Department in what later became known as the Haas Report.¹⁷⁴ Federal courts and the Interior Board of Indian Appeals have repeatedly held that Section 18 elections constitute unambiguous evidence that the Department considered a tribe or reservation to be under federal jurisdiction in 1934.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Id.* at 2.

¹⁶⁸ *Id.* at 2-4.

¹⁶⁹ *Id.* at 2.

¹⁷⁰ IRA, § 18.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Stand Up for California! v. U.S. Department of the Interior*, 204 F.Supp.3d 212, 289 (D.D.C. 2016), *aff'd*, 879 F.3d 1177 (D.C. Cir. 2018), *cert. den.*, 139 S.Ct. 786 (Jan. 7, 2019).

¹⁷³ Haas Report at 3.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Table A at 13-20 (listing Section 18 elections conducted).

¹⁷⁵ *See, e.g., Stand Up for California! v. U.S. Dept. of the Interior*, 919 F.Supp.2d 51, 67-68 (D.D.C. 2013) (Section 18 elections conclusive evidence of being under federal jurisdiction); *Stand Up for California! v. United States Dep't of Interior*, 879 F.3d 1177 (D.C. Cir. 2018), *cert. den.*, 139 S.Ct. 786 (Jan. 7, 2019); *Cachil Dehe Band of Wintun*

In 1934, the United States understood that the Tribe and its Rancheria were under the federal jurisdiction and supervision of the United States, and that the adult residents of the Tribe's Rancheria met the IRA's definition of "Indian." As detailed in the Haas Report, on June 10, 1935, a majority of the adult Indians residing on the Rancheria elected to reject the IRA by a vote of 11 to 7.¹⁷⁶

In 1983, Congress amended the IRA to clarify that Section 5 of the IRA applies to "all tribes notwithstanding section 18 of such Act."¹⁷⁷ As confirmed by the Supreme Court in *Carciari*, this amendment "by its terms simply ensures that tribes may benefit from [Section 5] even if they opted out of the IRA pursuant to [Section 18], which allowed tribal members to reject application of the IRA to their tribe."¹⁷⁸

Summary

Consistent with Step 2 of the Solicitor's Guidance, the Section 18 election that the Department conducted on the Laytonville Rancheria on June 10, 1935 unambiguously establishes that the United States considered the Tribe to be under federal jurisdiction in 1934. As such, the Tribe satisfies Category 1. We therefore conclude that the Secretary has the authority to acquire land-in-trust for the Tribe under Section 5 of the IRA.

Section 151.10(b) – Need

The acquisition of the Parcel will enhance tribal self-determination and self-governance for the Tribe. Placing the Parcel into trust is important to the Tribe because it will give the Tribe rights to govern the land. It is important for the Tribe to have the inherent right to govern its own lands and is one of the most essential powers of any sovereign tribal government. The Tribe would be able to determine its own course in addressing the needs of its government and its members. This trust acquisition would enable the Tribe to re-establish jurisdiction over a portion of its traditional land base, thereby allowing for protection of its unique Indian land status and preservation of a historic and culturally significant site of the Tribe.

The Parcel is located approximately one mile east of Laytonville Rancheria. The Parcel and the Laytonville Rancheria are the only two parcels of land within the boundaries of the Tribe's traditional area, remaining in Indian ownership, which are sites of historic and cultural significance to the Tribe. The subject land is in an area traditionally used by the Tribe for gathering traditional materials used in economic, spiritual, and traditional activities. The Tribe

Indians of Colusa Indian Cmty. v. Zinke, 889 F.3d 584, 596 (9th Cir. 2018); *Village of Hobart, Wisc. v. Acting Midwest Reg. Dir., Bureau of Indian Affairs*, 57 IBIA 4, 21 (2013) (Sec. 18 election provides "brightline test" for determining UFJ); *Shawano County, Wisc. v. Acting Midwest Reg. Dir., Bureau of Indian Affairs*, 53 IBIA 62, 74 (2011) (Sec. 18 vote necessarily recognized and determined that a tribe was under federal jurisdiction, "notwithstanding the Department of the Interior's admittedly inconsistent dealings with the Tribe in previous years.").

¹⁷⁶ Haas Report at 15 (listed under the Sacramento Agency as Laytonville).

¹⁷⁷ Indian Land Consolidation Act, Pub. L. No. 97-459, 96 Stat. 2515 (Jan. 12, 1983), codified as amended at 25 U.S.C. §§ 2201-2201.

¹⁷⁸ *Carciari*, 555 U.S. at 394-95.

needs the Parcel in trust to consolidate and protect the unique Indian land status and ensure its integration back onto the Tribe's land base. This will further enhance Tribal self-determination by ensuring that the Parcel is not used in a manner contrary to the Tribe's governmental, historical, and cultural interests. It is the goal of the Tribe to assume governmental jurisdiction over all their lands in order to exercise tribal sovereignty, provide for the long-term benefit of the Tribe and tribal members and to consolidate its trust land holdings. The Parcel would provide greater control over land use matters by transferring jurisdiction over land use decisions from the City and County to the Tribe and federal government. By placing the Parcel in trust it will further tribal self-determination by allowing the Tribe to exercise its jurisdiction as a sovereign tribal government to maintain and protect the Parcel for future generations.

The United States purchased 200-acres, under the authority of the Act of June 21, 1906, for Laytonville Rancheria establishing federal jurisdiction for the Cahto Indian Tribe (June 21, 1906. (34 Stat., 325)). The 200 acres of land were taken into trust by the United States and comprised the original reservation, titled and known as the *Laytonville Rancheria*, evidence that the Tribe remained under federal jurisdiction. Further probative evidence in the Interior's archives shows that the Tribe retained its jurisdictional status and that the United States exercised jurisdiction over it before, during, and after 1934. This reservation continues to be under federal jurisdiction today and is used and occupied by the Tribe. Furthermore, Laytonville Rancheria voted to accept or reject the Indian Reorganization Act on June 10, 1935, *Ten Years of Tribal Government Under I.R.A.* by Theodore H. Haas, Chief Counsel, U.S. Indian Service (1947) at page 15. Participation in a Secretarial Election is determinative that the Tribe was under federal jurisdiction. Based on the principles and criteria set forth by the Assistant Secretary, the Tribe was under federal jurisdiction in 1934.

Approximately 250 tribal members currently live on the existing Laytonville Rancheria. The Tribe's reservation is approximately 200 acres located in northwest California, approximately one mile west of the town of Laytonville and twenty-six miles north of Willits, on U.S. Highway 101. The land was originally bought by missionaries for landless Indians, but title problems eventually convinced the federal government to take over the purchase by 1908. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) purchased the 200 acres under the authority of the Act of June 21, 1906, establishing the Laytonville Rancheria. The land remains in tribal jurisdiction and is located within traditional Cahto territory.

It is our determination that the Tribe has established a need for additional lands to protect the environment and preserve the reservation.

Section 151.10(c) – Purpose

The proposed use is the development of a gas station and convenience store. The purpose of the fee-to-trust application is to expand and diversify economic development activities for the Tribe. The development of a gas station and convenience store would increase Tribal revenue, provide employment and managerial experience for Tribal members and members of the community, and offer economic development opportunities that would support the Tribe's self-determination.

The Parcel is located in the unincorporated community of Laytonville. The proposed use is consistent with the existing County land use and planning for the area. The Parcel would

provide economic benefit to the Tribe, the County, and the local Community as well and provide needed services to travelers on Highway 101.

Section 151.10(e) – Impact on State or Local Tax Base

The net assessed value of parcel 014-130-055 is \$227,817. Per the Fiscal Year 2016- 2017 property tax bill, the assessed amount was \$2,278. The total tax amount for parcel 014-130-055 is \$2,868.94 per year. Accordingly, the impact on the State and its political subdivisions resulting from the removal of the Parcel from the tax rolls is approximately \$1,560.46 per year. The removal of the Parcel from the tax roll will have no material impact on local government or the State of California. The amount of property taxes assessed on these parcels is small in comparison to the County’s annual property tax revenue. According to the California State Controller’s Office, statistical report by County, the total amount of all secured taxes charged by Mendocino County during the 2016-2017 was \$124,842,477. Property taxes for the Parcel are *de minimis* in comparison to the County’s overall tax revenue. The taxable value of parcel 014-130-055 presents approximately 0.0023% of the annual property tax revenue, which accounts to less than 0.0023% of Mendocino County’s annual property tax revenue. Thus, removal of the subject Parcel from the County tax roll will have minimal, if any, effect on the County’s annual property tax revenue.

It is our determination that no significant impact will result from the removal of the Parcel from the county tax rolls given the relatively small amount of tax revenue assessed on the Parcel.

Section 151.10(f) – Jurisdictional Problems and Potential Land Use Conflicts

The Tribe does not anticipate that any significant jurisdictional problems or conflicts will occur as a result of the transfer of the Parcel into trust. In evaluating the Tribe’s request for the acquisition of the Parcel in trust status, the reviewing agencies will consider impacts to the State of California and its political subdivisions, including any jurisdictional problems and potential conflicts of land use that may arise. There are three concerns that arise under this category: 1) The intended use of the Parcel and the potential effects of removing the Parcel from the jurisdictional reach of State, local zoning and land use laws; 2) Regulation of the activities the Tribe intends to conduct on the Parcel and the potential effects of removing the Parcel from State and local laws relating to health, environment, safety, labor, etc.; and 3) Criminal jurisdiction over the Parcel. The following provides a detailed discussion of these impacts.

1. **Intended Tribal Use of the Property:** The Federal government’s acceptance of the Parcel into Trust for the benefit of the Tribe will have the effect of removing the Parcel from State and local zoning and land use laws. The Tribe’s intended use of the Parcel does not represent a substantial departure from the present zoning or land use laws. The Parcel currently consists of undeveloped land within the unincorporated portion of Mendocino County. Land uses surrounding the Parcel are primarily rural residences and commercial. The Parcel is zoned as general commercial and the proposed mini mart would be a permitted use of the land zoned as such, and the gas station would be permitted upon issuance of a minor use permit. To the extent that the Tribe’s intended use differs from the existing zoning and land use laws, mitigation measures will be undertaken to minimize any potential impacts on the surrounding community. Such mitigation

measures will be the subject of government-to-government discussions between the Tribe and the affected local governments, and will assure that the enactment of Tribal laws address the substantive provisions of current county and local laws.

The Tribe has agreements with local municipalities for public services to the proposed travel center on the Parcel. The Long Valley Fire Protection District has agreed to provide fire protection services to the Parcel with Municipality Agreements. The Laytonville Fire Department, an entity of the Long Valley Fire Protection District, currently provides services to the Laytonville Rancheria. The Laytonville County Water District has also agreed to provide water service to the Parcel for the travel center with approved Municipality Agreements. The Tribe anticipates a cooperative relationship with local government.

2. Regulation of Tribal Activities on the Property: The federal government's acceptance of the Parcel into trust for the Tribe will have the effect of removing the Parcel from state and local laws concerning health, environment, safety, and labor on the Parcel. The application of substantive provisions of such local laws to the Parcel after the United States acquires the Parcel in trust for the Tribe will be the subject of government-to-government discussions between the Tribe and affected local governments, culminating in the enactment of tribal laws which will address the substantive provisions of current county and local laws.
3. Regulation of Criminal Activities on the Property: The Parcel is currently subject to criminal jurisdiction of the State of California and Mendocino County. Once the Parcel is accepted into trust and becomes part of the Laytonville Rancheria, as a function of federal law, the State of California will continue to have the same territorial criminal jurisdiction over the Parcel and the transactions that occur on the Parcel. Under 18 U.S.C. § 1162 and 28 U.S.C. § 1360 (P.L. 83-280), the State of California will retain its jurisdiction to enforce its criminal/prohibitory laws against all persons involving conduct occurring on the reservation. The provision of law enforcement services will continue to be the responsibility of the Mendocino County Sheriff's Department, and prosecutions of criminal offenses committed on the reservation will continue to be brought in state courts.

Section 151.10(g) – BIA Ability to Discharge Additional Responsibilities

The Tribe anticipates that the BIA will not incur any additional responsibilities as a result of the conversion of the Parcel to trust status. The Tribe intends to be responsible for all expenses and maintenance with regard to the Parcel and to address all legal matters that may arise with regard to the Parcel. As the Tribe becomes more self-sufficient, its dependence on assistance from the BIA will diminish.

Section 151.10(h) – National Environmental Policy Act and Hazardous Substances Determination

In accordance with Interior Department Policy (602 DM 2), we are charged with the responsibility of conducting a site assessment for the purposes of determining the potential of, and extent of liability from hazardous substances or other environmental remediation or injury.

The record includes a negative Phase 1 “Contaminant Survey Checklist” dated December 9, 2015, reflecting that there were no hazardous materials or contaminants.

National Environmental Policy Act Compliance

An additional requirement that has to be met when considering land acquisition proposals is the impact upon the human environment pursuant to the criteria of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The BIA’s guidelines for NEPA compliance are set forth in the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ Manual (59 IAM). An environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed action was distributed for public review and comment for the period beginning February 13, 2017, and ending March 16, 2017. The EA documents and analyzes potential impacts to land resources, water resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, socioeconomic conditions, resource use patterns (transportation and land use and agricultural), public services, public health/hazardous materials, and other values (noise and visual resources). A Finding of No Significant Impact was signed on May 11, 2017.

Based on the analysis disclosed in the EA, review and consideration of the public comments received during the review period, responses to the comments, and mitigation measures imposed, the BIA has determined that the proposed Federal action is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of human environment within the meaning of NEPA. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Section 151.11(b) – The Location of the Land Relative to State Boundaries, And its Distance from the Boundaries of the Tribe’s Reservation

The Parcel is located within the County of Mendocino and is approximately 161 miles from the Oregon border, approximately 186 miles from the Nevada border, approximately 608 miles from the Border of Mexico. Further, the Parcel lies within the County of Mendocino, and is approximately one mile from the Tribe’s Rancheria (trust lands).

Section 151.11(c) – Business Purpose

The Tribe has prepared a business plan specifying the anticipated economic benefits associated with the Tribe’s travel center/convenience store. The Tribe’s travel center/convenience store is designed to provide revenue for existing and future tribal government programs, which will in turn improve the general health and welfare of all tribal members. Further, the project will provide the Tribe an opportunity to generate seed money for other economic ventures.

Per the project description, the Tribe’s travel center/convenience store will be appropriately sized, and designed to be aesthetically compatible with the surrounding environment. The Tribe intends to provide the sale of general merchandise and fuel to customers in its targeted market located off Highway 101 in Laytonville, California. The proposed site is in close proximity to water, wastewater and other utility services. It is expected that the Tribe will work with local municipalities for services. The overall development plan also outlines and evaluates the option for self-contained facilities.

Section 151.11 (d) - Contact with State and Local Governments

The Notice of Application (NOA) dated October 16, 2017, was mailed to local and state governments informing them of the land acquisition and gives them 30 days to provide comments relating to the acquisition. The NOA was mailed to the following local and state governments:

California State Clearinghouse, Office of Planning and Research
Deputy Attorney General, Department of Justice, State of California
Tribal Negotiations, Office of the Governor of California
Office of the Honorable Dianne Feinstein, United States Senate
Mendocino County Planning & Building Services
Mendocino County Board of Supervisor
Mendocino County Fire Department
Mendocino County Treasurer-Tax Collector
Mendocino County Assessor-Clerk Recorder
Mendocino County Department of Transportation
Mendocino County Office of Emergency Services
Deputy County Counsel
Hopland Rancheria
Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians
Guidiville Rancheria
Laytonville Rancheria
Manchester-Point Arena Rancheria
Pinoleville Rancheria
Potter Valley Rancheria
Red Valley Rancheria
Round Valley Reservation
Sherwood Valley Rancheria

There was no opposition to the land acquisition by the state or local governments.

25 CFR 151.13 Title Examination

Title review by the Office of the Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region, was requested on September 22, 2017, and a favorable opinion of title was issued on October 19, 2017. The procedure for acquiring title to Parcel by the United States of America in trust for the Tribe is acknowledged and in accordance with the Department's procedures.


Additionally, the legal description for the Parcel has been reviewed by the Bureau of Land Management Indian Lands Surveyor who has confirmed that the legal land description for the Parcel as written and referenced herein is sufficient and complies with the Department boundary standards.

Decision

The proposed use and purpose of the Parcel is non-gaming, not illegal, and not in conflict with existing land use. In view of the foregoing, all applicable legal requirements have been satisfied and I hereby approve the trust acquisition of the subject 1.38 acres, more or less, of land. This decision constitutes a final agency action under 5 U.S.C. 704. Consistent with applicable law and Departmental requirements, the Regional Director shall accept the land in trust.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Mr. Mervel Harris in the BIA's Pacific Regional Office, Branch of Real Estate Services, at (916) 978-6062.

Sincerely,



Tara Sweeney
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs

cc: Associate Solicitor, Indian Affairs
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Regional Director, Pacific Region