



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

JAN 19 2017

The Honorable Raymond C. Hitchcock
Chairperson, Wilton Rancheria
9728 Kent Street
Elk Grove, California 95624

Dear Chairperson Hitchcock:

The Tribe submitted an application in 2013 to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) requesting that the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) acquire approximately 282 +/- acres of land in trust near Galt, Sacramento County, California, for gaming and other purposes. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) identified a site near Galt as the proposed action that would allow for the development of the Tribe's proposed casino/hotel project. In 2016, after evaluating all alternatives in the DEIS, the BIA instead selected the Elk Grove Mall Site, which was identified as Alternative F in the DEIS, as its preferred alternative to allow for the Tribe's proposed project. Under Alternative F, the Secretary will acquire approximately 35.92 acres of land in the City of Elk Grove, Sacramento County, California (Site) for gaming and other purposes. I note that the elected leadership for the City of Elk Grove supports the Tribe's application.

This Tribe was affected by the United States' termination policy, which has since been repudiated. Termination severed the Tribe's government-to-government relationship. In 2009, the United States corrected history and restored its federal government-to-government relationship with the Tribe. However, the almost 50 years of termination still impacts the Tribe, with this being the first request for trust land since its restoration. Pursuant to Section 5 of the Indian Reorganization Act, 25 U.S.C. §5108, the application is approved.

The reasons for this decision are reflected in the attached analysis and follow a thorough review of the Tribe's history and application, the administrative record, and comments submitted by numerous interested parties. The Department also developed an Environmental Impact Statement, which 1) included an in-depth analysis of potential impacts from the proposed casino/resort and 2) required mitigation measures to address potential impacts.

Although the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) generally prohibits gaming activities on lands acquired in trust by the United States on behalf of a tribe after October, 17, 1988, an exception is made for lands that are acquired in trust as part of the "restoration of lands for an Indian tribe that is restored to Federal recognition." 25 U.S.C. § 2719(b)(1)(B)(iii). We have determined that the lands under our review meet the restored lands exception of IGRA and are eligible for gaming.

This decision to restore tribal homelands for the Tribe will set a course to promote the current Federal policies of tribal self-determination and self-governance. According to the Tribe, approximately 62 percent of the tribal families are below the federal poverty line with 45 percent of the adult members unemployed.

As a result of this acquisition, the Tribe will be positioned to achieve long-term and stable economic development, which will provide employment opportunities for tribal members. Revenue from economic development will greatly enhance the Tribe's ability to promote the health and safety of its members. Increased revenue will also contribute to and enhance educational and cultural programs, and increase services available to tribal members.

The decision to acquire this land in trust for the Tribe implements IGRA's direction to place those tribes that endured termination on an equal footing with tribes that were not subject to that repudiated Federal policy. We thank the Tribe, the Mayor of Elk Grove, other interested parties, and the public for their engagement throughout this process with our staff to make this decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lawrence S. Roberts", with a stylized, circular flourish at the end.

Lawrence S. Roberts
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary-
Indian Affairs