



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

JUN 06 2022

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
Governor of Michigan
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer:

Thank you for your letter dated May 23, 2022, addressed to Secretary Haaland, requesting a second extension of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Secretarial Determination request for concurrence and expedited review of the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians' request for federal acknowledgement. The Secretary asked me to respond on her behalf and I am pleased to do so.

We appreciate that the timeline of these two decisions has caused difficulty for you and your office. Regarding the request for concurrence, the Department of the Interior's (Department) regulations at 25 C.F.R. section 292.23(b) allow for one 180-day extension period for Secretarial Determinations. The regulations then state that [i]f no extension is granted or if the Governor does not respond during the extension period, the Secretarial Determination is no longer valid." See 25 CFR 292.23(c). On December 16, 2021, the Department granted a 180-day extension, and as we are bound by the regulations, we cannot issue another.

We also understand the urgency of providing a proposed finding on federal acknowledgement for the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic many research facilities were closed, including several in the State of Michigan, causing the Office of Federal Acknowledgement (OFA) to issue a conditional suspension on the research and review of this petition on April 16, 2020. The OFA lifted that suspension on April 15, 2022, and has requested additional information from the Tribe as well. We are unable to share information on the likelihood of an outcome before the proposed finding is issued. The OFA will continue to review this petition and issue a proposed finding in line with the 180-day timeframe in the regulations.

Thank you again for your letter and addressing your concerns. If you have any further questions, you may contact Ms. Kathryn Isom-Clause, Deputy Assistant Secretary – Policy and Economic Development, at (202) 208-7163.

Sincerely,

Wizipan Garriott
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary — Indian Affairs