

Lac Vieux Desert Band Of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribal Government

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LAC VIEUX DESERT BAND OF LAKE SUPERIOR CHIPPEWA INDIANS - Watersmeet, Michigan

The Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians is pleased to announce that on October 21, 2022, the Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior approved several applications to take in excess of 500 acres of land into trust for the benefit of the Tribe – these approvals more than double the size of the Tribe’s previous Reservation and help to restore the Tribe’s control over their historic homelands.

Trust applications for these parcels have been pending since 2019. In March 2020, the Tribe’s fee-to-trust applications were stalled by the Trump Administration’s change in long-standing policy by requiring the Solicitor of the Department Interior to issue an IRA Opinion¹ for each tribe seeking land in trust. Although seemingly settled by guidance issued in 2014, the Trump administration revisited the 2009 United States Supreme Court decision in *Carcieri v. Salazar* and with little warning or guidance made changes to the process. Despite the policy changes, steps were taken by Lac Vieux Desert to aid and urge the issuance of an IRA opinion for the Tribe. However, the applications went largely without movement between the policy change in 2020 and March, 2022.

As a promise to Indian Country, the Biden Administration took immediate steps to reinstate the 2014 policy position of the Department of Interior in January 2021. In March 2022 those tribes such as Lac Vieux Desert, who reaffirmed its relationship with the federal government through legislative action, were allowed to proceed in the fee-to-trust process. The new Reservation parcels include land on which the current Tribal Administration Building is located, two residential parcels, and other rural and commercial property previously held in fee by the Tribe. “These long-awaited decisions are welcome and the first of several the Tribe expects in the coming years. The Tribe is committed to rebuilding and protecting its homeland as well as exercising its authority to promote economic development and self-sufficiency” said Tribal Chairman James Williams, Jr. He continued “We appreciate the efforts of the staff the B.I.A. Michigan Agency and will continue our relationship of cooperation and respect throughout the coming years.”

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¹ A long and costly historical, legal and factual analysis to determine whether the Secretary of the Interior has authority to take land into trust for an Indian tribe by establishing that the tribe was “under Federal jurisdiction” in 1934 and “recognized” as a tribe by the federal government.