



St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Paul O. Thompson
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NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:
Enniskó:wa/March 6, 2015

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39 Acres of Mohawk Land Has Been Returned to Akwesasne *Land In Trust Process Successful*

Akwesasne, NY – The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe has received verification that the 39-acre parcel that was subject of a Federal Land In Trust application, located in the Town of Fort Covington has been taken into trust. The Land In Trust process was initiated after the 2005 settlement negotiations deteriorated when surrounding counties pulled their support. In June of 2014, the SRMT received notification that an administrative ruling had cleared the way for territory expansion as a result of a 39-acre land in trust application filed by the Tribe in 2007. Once the Secretary of the Interior recognizes land as part of Akwesasne, no further property taxes will be owed and the land will be treated, jurisdictionally, as reservation. When land is taken into trust by the Federal government, it is protected from ever being considered State or County property. Federal law does not require that the County or Town agree for land to be taken into trust, and it does not require that the towns or County be paid for any potential property tax loss in the future. Further, there are no financial obligations from the State to the County, as there would be under a negotiated final settlement agreement. The Supreme Court has ruled that tribes have a right to take land in trust regardless of ongoing land claim litigation.

Additional parcels of land in the towns of Fort Covington and Bombay, NY are now being identified to be included in a second land to trust application, which would be filed in a few months. “We are considering both residential and commercial properties owned by the Tribe or tribal members,” shared Chief Beverly Cook.

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State, St. Lawrence County and NYPA on May 28, 2014. The Tribe anticipated a similar agreement would be negotiated between the State and Franklin County in a reasonable timeframe.

“During the past two years, Franklin County has continued to levy property taxes and foreclose on property owned by Mohawks. It is our duty to protect our people from additional foreclosures in the event we cannot reach settlement,” stated Chief Ron LaFrance, “although our first acquisition has taken almost seven years to complete, we believe that with recent changes to federal law and policy, future acquisitions will proceed much more quickly.”

The Tribe expects that future acquisitions will progress at an expedited pace because the arguments raised in opposition to it have already been dismissed. Unlike settlement, there is no restriction on acreage or location and there are no future property tax payment requirements. Under a negotiated

settlement, the County and Towns receive the anticipated loss of tax revenue in perpetuity from the State. Under a land in trust acquisition, the Tribe is only obligated to pay past due taxes. “We’ve stated consistently that a negotiated settlement where all parties terms are taken into consideration is and always has been preferred to the land in trust process,” reaffirmed Chief Paul Thompson. Mohawks currently own approximately 1700 acres in the Town of Bombay and approximately 1000 acres in the Town of Fort Covington, including properties located in the Village of Fort Covington.

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe established a [website](#) to share the facts behind the proposed settlement terms with [maps of the land claim area](#) that can be viewed at www.resolveboundary.com.

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The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council is the duly elected and federally recognized government of the Saint Regis Mohawk People.