



The Fort Sill Apache Tribe's Formal Request for Its Casino Has Begun

The Bureau of Indian Affairs submits Section 20 letter to Governor Susana Martinez on behalf of the Tribe

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fort Sill Apache Reservation, Akela, New Mexico (June 6, 2012) – The United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Southwest Regional Office has informed Governor Susana Martinez that the Chiricahua Warm Springs Apache Tribe (Fort Sill Apache Tribe) wishes to begin the process of developing/operating a Class III Gaming Facility on its reservation located in Akela, Luna County, New Mexico.

The Office of Indian Gaming Management has determined that no restrictions to game exist on the property and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is prepared to initiate the consultation process required to support the requisite two-part determination under Section 20 of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). The BIA sent the Section 20 letter to Governor Martinez on May 15, 2012.

“I am pleased that the BIA confirmed our understanding that there are no restrictions to game on our reservation,” said Fort Sill Apache Tribal Chairman Jeff Haozous. “We’ve met with elected officials in Deming, Luna County, Las Cruces, Silver City, Grant County and Hidalgo County who say that the Apache Homelands Casino is in the best interest of the local community. We look forward to receiving support from the Governor.”

A copy of the official Section 20 letter the BIA sent to Governor Martinez and elected officials in Deming, Luna County, Las Cruces, Dona Ana County, the Village of Hatch, the Mescalero Apache Tribe and the Pueblo of Ysleta del Sur, is available for review at

<http://www.fortsillapachenewmexico.com>.

In 1968, the U.S. Indian Claims Commission (ICC) determined that the Fort Sill Apache Tribe was the legal successor of the Apache Indians, including the Chiricahua, Warm Springs, Nednais and Bedonkhe bands. These four Apache bands once lived in southwestern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona until their forced removal as Prisoners of War following the surrender of one of their leaders, Geronimo.

The ICC went on to find that the Tribe was in possession of 14 million acres of land in New Mexico and Arizona and that this land was illegally taken from the Tribe. These landmark decisions were approved by the U.S. Supreme Court.

While they always maintained their status as a tribe, the Chiricahua and Warm Springs bands of Apaches' government-to-government relationship with the United States, which was severed during the imprisonment, was restored in 1976 when they organized with a constitution as the federally recognized Fort Sill Apache Tribe.

After receiving an invitation from the Governor of New Mexico in 1995 and again in 2000 to return to New Mexico, the Tribe purchased the property at Akela Flats in 1998 and was granted a Reservation in November 2011. The Tribe is seeking equality with other New Mexico Tribes and Pueblos to game on its property.

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