

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 5, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

I write to request the resolution of the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians' (Grand River) petition for federal acknowledgment, which has been on the "active consideration" list since December 1, 2013.¹

In 1994, H.R. 2376 was signed into law,² which recognized two Michigan Ottawa tribes whose histories are virtually identical to that of Grand River: the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians and the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians. However, Grand River wasn't included in this legislation because tribal elders feared the federal government's intrusion into their lives if they were recognized. Following this legislation, Congress acknowledged the claims of the Grand River Bands in 1997, when it enacted the Michigan Indian Land Claims Settlement Act,³ which reserved a percentage of the funds appropriated for payment of land claims to "newly recognized or reaffirmed tribes" and included a provision that allowed an additional 11 years for additional tribes to be recognized to qualify for those funds. Grand River sent a letter of intent for federal recognition to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in 1994, over 27 years ago, but is still waiting to receive a notice of proposed finding.

In 2013, BIA stated it would take approximately 18 months to review and present its proposed findings. To date, it's been nearly 8 years and each deadline has been met with an additional 90-day extension—the latest of which expires 90 to 180 days after the Office of Federal Acknowledgment's (OFAs) COVID-19 conditional suspension is lifted. While the federal acknowledgment process can be lengthy even under the best circumstances, Grand River has experienced extraordinary delays without substantial explanations from the Department. Therefore, I respectfully request that OFA issue a proposed finding on Grand River's petition by the end of this year.

I have no predetermined view of what ultimate decision the Department should reach on Grand River's petition, but I respectfully request your assistance in breaking this cycle and bringing the process to a close. Please contact Naomi Miguel at Naomi.Miguel@mail.house.gov with any questions about this request.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



¹ Petition #146

² P.L. 103-324

³ P.L. 105-143