

Gun Lake Casino announces opening date, but possible court battle looms - WWMT

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WAYLAND TOWNSHIP, Mich. (NEWSCHANNEL 3) – There is now a firm opening date for West Michigan's newest casino.

February 11th is the date set for the opening of the Gun Lake Casino, but as the announcement is made, it comes with a bit of controversy.

On Friday the date of February 11th was announced, this comes after a decade-long struggle in court and elsewhere to get the casino up and running.

“It's been ten long, hard years of work,” said D.K. Sprague, Tribe Chairman.

The plan to bring a casino to the area has been controversial from the very beginning, with groups fighting against gambling in the rural area of Wayland Township.

The casino sits halfway between Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo and will have slots and most of the typical table games.

Those with the casino say they're looking forward to opening their doors and putting an end to all the disagreements.

“That's a big focus in our training,” said casino employee Kimberly Brehmer, “make sure all of our guests are well taken care of and having a lot of fun while there.”

But as they celebrate the opening, a twist. A federal appeals court has revived a lawsuit challenging the casino's right to operate.

A local man sued the government in federal court over how the land was placed in trust. His

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contention is that the band of Pottawatomie Indians wasn't under federal jurisdiction in 1934, as would be required for a casino to happen.

Attorneys on both sides say the case is still open and could ultimately go to the U.S. Supreme Court. If the casino loses the court battle, it could be forced to shut down.

Ultimately though, those at the casino say they are plowing ahead with their plan to open in a few weeks.

"We're not concerned one bit," said Sprague. "We're going forward with the grand opening and employ 700 people from the area and it's all good."

700 employees have already been hired at the Gun Lake Casino, so there's no doubt that there is a lot at stake in the ongoing court process.

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