

Written by Administrator

Saturday, 22 January 2022 19:15 -

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BOSTON (AP) — Federal authorities are opposing renewed efforts to block a Massachusetts tribe's sovereign reservation and its planned resort casino.

The U.S. Department of the Interior, in a legal brief filed in Boston federal court on Jan. 14, argues the court should reject a [bid by opponents to reopen](#) a federal court challenge to the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe's more than 300-acre reservation in southeastern Massachusetts.

The agency said any efforts to revive old litigation are "moot" since the Biden administration issued a new decision in December [affirming](#) the tribe's reservation and reversing a controversial Trump-era effort to rescind the designation.

"Plaintiffs try to obscure this fact by claiming they want to 'return' to the claims they advanced," the Interior Department said in its filing. "But there is nothing to return to."

A group of residents in Taunton, where the tribe plans a \$1 billion resort casino, maintains the tribe isn't eligible for a reservation because it wasn't an officially recognized tribe in 1934, the year the federal Indian Reorganization Act became law.

They also argue the tribe's lands in Taunton shouldn't have been included in its reservation because they weren't part of the Cape Cod tribe's historical domain. The tribe's reservation encompasses about 170 acres in the town of Mashpee and another 150 acres in Taunton.

Lawyers for the anti-casino group didn't respond to emails seeking comment this week.

The Mashpee Wampanoag tribe, meanwhile, has asked the court this month to join the case as a defendant so it can "fully defend" its rights and interests.

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Lawyers for the tribe argue casino opponents have “engaged in a relentless attack” that's “preventing the tribe from being able to lift itself out of poverty, interfering with the development of tribal housing, and making it increasingly difficult to provide health services to address COVID-19, substance abuse and mental health.”

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