

Date: June 5, 2009
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Secretary Salazar Gives NPS and Landowners Deadline for Agreement for Flight 93 Memorial

No condemnation needed if parties can reach agreement

WASHINGTON, DC – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today reiterated his commitment to complete the Flight 93 Memorial in time for the 10th anniversary and directed Dan Wenk, Acting Director of the National Park Service, to negotiate for one more week to reach an agreement with the landowners over the property needed to build the memorial. The Park Service and the landowners have been working to find agreement for several years.

“Our grateful nation will never forget the heroism of the men and women of Flight 93 who died in the fields of western Pennsylvania, and we have a moral obligation to complete the memorial by September 11, 2011,” said Salazar.

“After meeting with the landowners and the Park Service today, I have high hopes that the parties are close to agreement and will be able to reach consensus over the land in the next week so we can keep the memorial on track without using eminent domain. Only if the parties are not able to reach agreement will we have to use the last resort of eminent domain to acquire land – in either case, however, landowners will return a fair price for their land,” said Salazar.

In the letter, Secretary Salazar outlined the following actions National Parks Service will take in the next week:

- Contact all landowners and schedule negotiations beginning on Monday, June 9, 2009.
- Have National Park Service representatives available in Somerset, Pennsylvania, from June 9 through 11, 2009.
- Report to my office the status of negotiations by Friday, June 12, 2009.

Full text of the letter is below:

The meeting today with the landowners regarding the acquisition of their property necessary for the construction of Flight 93 Memorial in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, was informative. It also provides an opportunity for the National Park Service to engage

in negotiations to acquire those lands without the need to use eminent domain authority. It is in our collective interest to reach agreement in a timely manner in order to complete Phase I of the memorial by the September 11, 2011.

The National Park Service will take the following actions;

- Contact all landowners and schedule negotiations beginning on Monday, June 8, 2009.
- Have National Park Service representatives available in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, from June 9 through 11, 2009.
- Report to my office the status of negotiations by Friday, June 12, 2009.

I expect the National Park Service to negotiate within the full extent of the government's authority for federal acquisition of property and to make every effort to come to a willing seller agreement with the landowners.

However, if we are not able to reach agreement during the week of June 8 through 12, 2009, it will be necessary to continue the legal processes that were initiated with the landowners in our letters of May 6, 2009.

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