

Mich. tells Bay Mills to close Vanderbilt casino - Bloomberg

Written by Administrator

Friday, 17 December 2010 10:32 -

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Michigan officials on Thursday told the Bay Mills Indian Community to immediately shut down a small casino the tribe opened last month in Vanderbilt, saying it violates state and federal law.

A letter sent to the tribe from the state attorney general's office

says Michigan officials are not persuaded the casino is on "Indian lands" as required for a legal gambling operation.

Bay Mills opened the Vanderbilt casino in early November and was quickly met with criticism from some other Michigan tribes that said it violated the law. The casino with roughly 40 slot machines is located in Michigan's northern Lower Peninsula, while the Bay Mills tribe is headquartered in the Upper Peninsula.

An operator answering the phone at the Vanderbilt casino on Thursday evening said the casino was open and referred questions to Bay Mills headquarters. Officials there did not immediately return phone calls seeking comment.

The case could have broader impact on determining rules for if and how tribes might open casinos not located on their reservations.

Bay Mills bought the Vanderbilt property this summer. According to the Thursday letter from the state, the tribe considers it tribal land because its purchase is connected to the Michigan Indian Land Claims Settlement Act.

The letter says Bay Mills has argued the casino can operate without review or approval from state or federal officials in part because the tribe already has an approved compact with the state. Bay Mills operates two casinos in the Upper Peninsula.

State officials say the Vanderbilt property purchase does not meet needed requirements for allowing gambling.

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