

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING

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**\$700,000 STUDY APPROVED FOR
COAL SURFACE MINING ON INDIAN LANDS**

A formal agreement has been signed by the Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining (OSM) with the Council of Energy Resource Tribes (CERT) of Washington, D.C., for a comprehensive \$700,000 study of surface mining of coal on Indian lands, OSM Director Walter N. Heine announced today.

The study, expected to take nine months, was contracted by OSM under Section 710 of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977. CERT was organized three years ago by 25 Indian tribes.

"The CERT report," Heine said, "will be incorporated into a broader study being undertaken by the Interior Department to examine the question of regulation of surface mining on Indian lands in compliance with the new Federal law which recognizes the special jurisdictional status of these Indian lands."

Heine said the Secretary's study also will be performed in consultation with Indian tribes, and will incorporate proposed legislation designed to allow the tribes to elect to assume full regulatory authority over the administration and enforcement of surface mining.

The CERT study is scheduled for completion by July 31, 1979, he reported. The report has several major objectives. These include:

- enabling the affected tribes to evaluate their functional capabilities to assure regulatory authority over surface mining of their lands;
- providing background information, analysis and evaluation of tribes' organizations and structures; and
- developing regulatory program models consistent with both tribal capabilities and the goals and objectives of the 1977 Federal Act.

It was noted that CERT membership, according to a tribe magazine, claims ownership of 15 percent of total U.S. coal reserves, including 30 percent of all surface coal reserves west of the Mississippi River. In 1974, a CERT spokesman said, Indian lands yielded over 15 million tons of coal.

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