Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Department of the Interior has recommended to Congress that legislation be enacted to distribute $2,500,000 in judgment funds to the Klamath Indians of Oregon.

The amount was settled upon by attorneys for the United States and for the Indians and represents redress for insufficient payment for lands ceded to the United States under Treaty in 1864. The case was adjudicated by the Indian Claims Commission last year and funds were appropriated by Congress in June 1964. The additional legislation is now needed to authorize final disposition.

Indians concerned are the Klamath and Modoc Tribes and the Yahooskin Band of the Snake Indians. Federal trust responsibility for their reservation--the Klamath Reservation in southern Oregon--was terminated by a 1954 Act of Congress. When the termination was proposed, the Klamaths were given an opportunity to remain as tribal members or to withdraw from tribal membership. Those who withdrew received sums of money as their share in tribal assets. Those who remained retain joint ownership in the balance of the assets. Both groups retained their interests in future claims awards.

As no further reservation programming is contemplated, distribution of the present judgment funds, and any future awards that result from pending claims, will be made on a per capita basis.

Those whose names appear on the final tribal roll published in 1957 (or their legal heirs) are eligible for per capita payments. There were 2,133 names on the roll, Distribution will be made equally to those who withdrew from tribal membership and those who did not.

In recommending the legislation the Department also proposed an amendment to provide for payment of necessary legal expenses and fees for prosecuting other Klamath claims still pending before the United States Claims Commission.

The Commission, which is independent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior, was established in 1946 as a special tribunal to consider Indian claims against the United States. Most of these claims are based on past land transactions between tribal groups and the Federal Government.