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Secretary of the Interior Thomas S. Kleppe and officers of the Alaska Native Regional Corporation, Konaig, Inc., today signed an agreement which will facilitate the conveyance of more than one million acres of land to the Corporation and its associated village corporations under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

The agreement provides the mechanism for processing land selections in the Konaig region and effecting conveyance of the land despite litigation pending in court.

Secretary Kleppe said that he expects this agreement to serve as a pattern for similar agreements with other Alaska regional corporations. "It gives us a way to convey the land to the Alaska Natives without waiting for final adjudication of easement questions. It sorts out and preserves the rights of the Alaskan Natives and the Government, whatever the court should decide."

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, enacted in 1971, provided for a cash settlement totaling about $1 billion, to be paid over a period of years, plus selection by the Natives of about 40 million acres of Federally owned lands in Alaska.

Koniag, Inc., is one of the 12 regional corporations, established under the Act, to share in the land distribution. Each of the regional corporations represent Native people with a common cultural heritage and common interests. Koniag, Inc., is composed of people from Kodiak Island and surrounding areas.

Secretary Kleppe said that the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation had signed an agreement in August to pave the way for beginning the conveyance of their land.

It is anticipated that the ten remaining corporations will approve agreements similar to the one signed today.