Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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Leo M. Krulitz, the Solicitor of the Department of the Interior, said today that unless Indian tribes can fully utilize their natural resources, the opportunity to determine their own future will hold little promise for them.

In an address to the two-day conference of the Federal Bar Association in Phoenix, Arizona, on Indian law, Krulitz said: "Self-determination will mean little to many Native Americans if the Federal trustee does not insure that water rights are preserved.

"Water is often critical to a full utilization of a tribe's other natural resources. Without it Indian tribes may be prevented from pursuing agricultural development, ranching, and mineral exploration and production."

Krulitz said that just as the late 1960's saw a marked increase in our awareness of the environmental implications of our actions, the late 1970's will be seen as the years in which the public becomes aware of the rights of Indians to participate to the full extent of their rights in the wealth of our Nation.

"From Maine to Alaska, Indians are asserting rights denied them for generations, rights which have been too easily ignored in the face of conflicting public policies," he said.

”President Carter, Secretary Andrus, and I are fully conscious of the Federal Government's trust responsibilities to Native Americans," he said. "We are intent upon seeing these responsibilities fulfilled."

Among the various alternatives in such cases he said that the Department's tentative posture is preference for the tribes to intervene with their own counsel. "Only in this way," he said, "can they be fully satisfied that their individual positions are asserted as forcefully as possible."