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WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Attorney General Eric Holder today announced the settlement of lawsuits filed by 41 federally-recognized tribes against the United States, in which the tribes alleged that the Department of the Interior and the Department of the Treasury had mismanaged monetary assets and natural resources held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the tribes. The announcement followed a 22-month-long negotiation between the tribes and the United States that has culminated in settlements between the government and tribes totaling more than $1 billion.

These settlements resolve claims dating back more than 100 years and will bring to an end protracted litigation that has burdened both the plaintiffs and the United States. Ending these long-running disputes about the United States' management of trust funds and non-monetary trust resources will allow the United States and the tribes to move beyond the distrust exacerbated by years of litigation. These settlement agreements represent a significant milestone in the improvement of the United States' relationship with Indian tribes.

"These settlements fairly and honorably resolve historical grievances over the accounting and management of tribal trust funds, trust lands, and other non-monetary trust resources that, for far too long, have been a source of conflict between Indian tribes and the United States," said Attorney General Holder. "Our commitment to tribes is the cornerstone of the Department of Justice's policies and initiatives in Indian Country, and these settlements will enable the tribal community to pursue the goals and objectives they deem to be appropriate while marking another step in our shared future built upon mutual respect and strong bonds of trust between tribal governments and the United States."

"These important settlements reflect President Obama's continuing commitment to ensuring empowerment and reconciliation for American Indians," said Secretary Salazar. "It strengthens the government-to-government relationship with Tribal nations, helps restore a positive working relationship with Indian Country leaders and empowers American Indian communities.

I want to commend Attorney General Holder, our Interior Solicitor Hilary Tompkins and other key officials who were involved in the long negotiations leading to these historic agreements. I look forward to working with Tribal leaders to further strengthen our government-to-government relationship based on mutual respect and a shared concern for the proper management of tribal trust assets and funds."

The Department of the Interior manages almost 56 million acres of trust lands for federally recognized tribes and more than 100,000 leases on those lands for various uses, including housing, timber harvesting, farming, grazing, oil and gas extraction, business leasing, rights-of-way and easements. Interior also manages about 2,500 tribal trust accounts for more than 250 tribes.

Starting in the fall of 2009, lawyers for many of the tribes with litigation pending against the United States wrote to the president and asked the administration to engage in expedited settlement discussions with their clients. In April 2010, Associate Attorney General Tom Perrelli, Assistant Attorney

General of the Environment and Natural Resources Division Ignacia Moreno, Interior Department Solicitor Hilary Tompkins and Treasury Department General Counsel George Madison met with attorneys for the tribes, and the parties embarked on a settlement process that the tribes termed the "Settlement Proposal to Obama Administration," or "SPOA," which led in part to today's announcement.

In addition to the SPOA process, the Departments of Justice, Interior and Treasury have been engaging in other settlement processes involving other litigating tribes. Those processes have been both positive and productive, resulting in the past settlement of other tribal trust accounting and management cases and the processes will continue for other ongoing cases. The United States is committed to resolving the trust accounting and trust management claims of the tribes in a manner that is fair, honorable, and reasonable to the tribes and the United States.

Under the negotiated settlement agreements, litigation will end regarding the Department of the Interior's accounting and management of the tribes' trust accounts, trust lands and other natural resources. With monies from the congressionally-appropriated Judgment Fund, which is used to pay settlements or final judgments against the government, the United States will compensate the tribes for their breach of trust claims, and the tribes will waive, release and dismiss their claims with prejudice. The parties have agreed to information sharing procedures that will strengthen the management of trust assets and improve communications between tribes and the Department of the Interior. The settlement agreements also include dispute resolution provisions to reduce the likelihood of future litigation.

The sum total of the settlements with the 41 tribes is approximately $1.023 billion

The 41 tribes are:

1. Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation

2. Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians

3. Blackfeet Tribe

4. Bois Forte Band of Chippewa Indians

5. Cachil Dehe Band of Wintun Indians of Colusa Rancheria

6. Coeur d'Alene Tribe

7. Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation

8. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation

9. Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

10. Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Reservation

11. Hualapai Tribe

12. Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians of Arizona

13. Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas
14. Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
15. Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Indians
16. Makah Tribe of the Makah Reservation
17. Mescalero Apache Nation
18. Minnesota Chippewa Tribe
19. Nez Perce Tribe
20. Nooksack Tribe
21. Northern Cheyenne Tribe
22. Passamaquoddy Tribe of Maine
23. Pawnee Nation
24. Pueblo of Zia
25. Quechan Indian Tribe of the Fort Yuma Reservation
26. Rincon Luiseño Band of Indians
27. Round Valley Tribes
28. Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
29. Santee Sioux Tribe
30. Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation
31. Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians
32. Spirit Lake Dakotah Nation
33. Spokane Tribe
34. Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of the Fort Yates Reservation
35. Swinomish Tribal Indian Community
36. Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians
37. Tohono O'odham Nation
38. Tulalip Tribe 39.Tule River Tribe

40. Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

41. Ute Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation

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