Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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TEMECULA, CALIFORNIA - The U.S. Department of the Interiors Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Aurene M. Martin, met here today with representatives of various State and Federal agencies and tribal leaders in a "rapid response" assistance effort to help some 2,750 members of a dozen Native American tribes who have been affected by three major wildfires in southern California. Ten deaths have been reported, an estimated 30,000 acres have burned and 130 homes have been destroyed on reservations of tribes in the region.

Martin says she has approved a plan for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to shift its resources to provide $723,000 in emergency funding for assistance to eligible tribal members impacted by the devastating fires. Martin says she is working within the Department of the Interior and with other federal agencies to identify sources for additional assistance that could be quickly utilized to assist the tribes.

"We have gathered the resources of the Federal government to help the tribes and tribal members who have been devastated by the recent wildfires," Martin said today. "The Pacific regional office of the BIA has taken hundreds of applications for assistance so far. Today, we have gathered the leading partners in our rapid response effort. Tribal governments that were not directly impacted by the recent fires, along with the State of California, have joined us in this important effort. For example, the Pechanga Band of Mission Indians offered its government offices for this meeting of tribal, state and federal agencies today. On the federal side, we have brought together the resources of BIA, FEMA - the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Indian Health Service to identify immediate and long-term assistance for the twelve affected tribes.

"I have approved the transfer of federal dollars within BIA to provide direct assistance to many who have suffered damages on California reservations in recent weeks. We are looking for more avenues of financial assistance for these tribes and their members." California tribes reported with direct impacts from recent wildfires include:

- Barona Band of Mission Indians - 8 deaths and all 6,296 acres of reservation land burned. 35-40 homes and a daycare lost.
- San Pasqual Band of Diegueno Indians - 2 deaths and all 1,380 acres of reservation land burned. All of the approximately 70 homes on the reservation were burned.
- Rincon Band of Mission Indians - Over 20 homes lost and three-quarters of the 4,269 acre reservation were scorched.
- San Manuel Band of Mission Indians - All 700 acres burned with 2 homes destroyed.
- Capitan Grande Band of Diegueno Mission Indians - All 15,753 acres of reservation land burned.
- Viejas Band of Mission Indians - 100 of 1,609 acres burned.
- Inaja-Cosmit Reservation - All 852 acres burned.
- Santa Ysabel Band of Mission Indians - 150 of 15,527 acres burned.
- La Jolla Band of Luiseno Indians - More than 2,000 acres of the 8,541 acre reservation burned.
- Sycuan Band of Mission Indians - 30 acres burned.
- Two reservations, the Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians [formerly the Cuyapaipe Band of

Mission Indians] (5,464 total reservation acres) and the Mesa Grande Band of Mission Indians (1,802 total reservation acres), were threatened by wildfires and faced evacuation orders, but have not reported damaged lands or property.

The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Department's trust responsibilities to individual and tribal trust beneficiaries, as well as promoting the self-determination and economic well-being of the nation's 562 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. The Assistant Secretary also oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is responsible for providing education and social services to approximately 1.4 million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the federally recognized tribes.