Action Corrects Oversight to Federally Recognized Tribes List

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Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Kevin Gover has reaffirmed the federal trust relationship between the United States and the King Salmon Tribe and the Shoonaq' Tribe in Alaska and the Lower Lake Rancheria in California after finding that their government-to-government relationship with the U.S. has never been severed. "The King Salmon Tribe, the Shoonaq' Tribe of Kodiak, and the Lower Lake Rancheria have been officially overlooked for many years by the Bureau of Indian Affairs even though their government-to-government relationship with the United States was never terminated," Gover stated in his finding dated December 29, 2000, "I am pleased to correct this egregious oversight." Due to administrative error, the BIA had for several years failed to place the three tribes on the list of federally recognized tribes it is required to publish annually in the Federal Register under the Federally Recognized Indian Tribes List Act (Pub. L. 103-454, 108 Stat. 4791, 4792). The list, entitled "Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services from the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs," was last published on March 13, 2000.

The Assistant Secretary found that the King Salmon Tribe of Alaska has existed and maintained a continuous Indian community from historic times, and that present-day tribal members are descendants of a group that had been forced to leave an earlier homesite destroyed during an eruption of Mount Katmai. The Assistant Secretary also found that the Shoonaq' Tribe of Kodiak, Alaska, has maintained a continuous political organization since European contact, that the Council of the Shoonaq' Tribe of Alaska has governed the historical Native community in and around the contemporary community of Kodiak, and that no other tribe has claimed the territory or the tribe's membership. Congress acknowledged Kodiak as an historic Native village possessing claims to aboriginal title in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). In 1987, the Kodiak Tribal Council learned it had not been included on a list of federally recognized tribes published by the BIA in the Federal Register and requested the Secretary of the Interior to correct the list.

In the case of the Lower Lake Rancheria of California, the Assistant Secretary found that the tribe had not been made subject to the Rancheria Act (Pub. L. 85-671, 72 Stat. 619, as amended by Pub. L. 88-419, 78 Stat. 390), by which Congress terminated the federal government's trust responsibility for dozens of California tribes during the 1950s, and that its tribal status has been continuously maintained by tribal members to the present day. With the Assistant Secretary's action the number of federally recognized tribes now stands at 561, which also includes two tribes recognized under H.R. 5528, the Omnibus Indian Advancement Act (Pub. L. 106-568, 114 Stat. 2868) signed by President Clinton on December 28, 2000. The Loyal Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, which since 1869 has been a culturally and linguistically separate entity within the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, was accorded federal recognition as an independent tribe. The Graton Rancheria of California, which had been terminated by the Rancheria Act, was restored to federal recognition status.

Contact information for the three reaffirmed tribes: The King Salmon Village Council, P.O. Box 68, King

Salmon, Alaska 99613-0068, the Honorable Ralph Angasan, Sr., President; The Shoonaq' Tribe of Kodiak, 713 East Rezanof Drive "B", Kodiak, Alaska 99615, the Honorable Kenneth Parker, Chairman; and The Lower Lake Rancheria, 131 Lincoln Street, Healdsburg, California 95448, the Honorable Daniel D. Beltran, Chairman. For more information, contact Marilyn Heiman, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Alaska, U.S. Department of the Interior, at (907) 271-5485, fax: (907) 271-4102, or Nedra Darling, Director, Office of Public Affairs, Bureau of Indian Affairs, at (202) 208-3710, fax: (202) 501- 1516.

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