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President Carter has named Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Thomas W. Fredericks co-chairman of the new American Indian Task Force, one of 14 task forces the Administration established to carry out its Small Community and Rural Development Policy (SCRD) of 1979.

SCRD's goals are to meet unique needs of and provide opportunities for rural people, and to promote responsible use and stewardship of natural resources and environment while enhancing the quality of rural life.

Earlier this year, the White House established 14 task forces, organized by functions (i.e., housing, transportation, education), to implement SCRD. The White House convened an American Indian Task Force in September and directed it to address issues impeding effective delivery of Federal services to Indian tribes. Eugene Eidenberg, Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs and Secretary to the Cabinet, is co-chairman of the task force with Fredericks.

"This task force is a means of enhancing the government-to-government relationship to tribes, as well as a means to improve coordination of Federal Indian programs," Fredericks said. "The task force will be able to build on past years of efforts at intergovernmental coordination responsive to tribal needs," he added. "And this is the first time we have had White House involvement and support to enforce proposed coordination."

As a way of coordinating programs more efficiently, the task force advised that a lead agency be assigned the responsibility for implementing task force recommendations.

The task force convened for the first time last month and organized into three groups to develop a set of actions and initiatives for the task force to consider at its next meeting.

The three groups are working in the following areas: problems related to substantive issues (such as water, energy, housing, and health); problems regarding interagency systems coordination; and development of a tribal consultation plan for SCRD as well as development of a comprehensive, ongoing consultation plan for all Federal agencies that deliver resources and services to Indian tribes.