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Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel leaves Washington today for an "on the scene" environmental inspection tour of three National Park System areas in Wyoming and Montana and a meeting with tribal chiefs of the Crow Indian Reservation.

His trip will include official visits to Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks Wednesday, July 1, through Saturday, July 4, followed by a meeting with the Crow Indian leaders—with whom he will smoke an "environmental peace pipe," at a ceremony in the Bighorn Canyon National Recreational Area.

The secretary announced plans for a series of environmental inspection tours Saturday, June 27, in a speech dedicating the new Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge on the Maine coast.

"I intend to take a hard look at the progress that is being made," he said. "I will do this through a series of environmental inspections around the Nation.…

"I will investigate such environmental and pollution problems as over-crowding… The 'pollution of the spirit' that can destroy even our great National Parks, if we allow them to become just 'parking lots in the woods.'

"Through these on-screen inspections, we can gain the knowledge we need to make the decisions we need," Secretary Hickel said.

His trip will put him in two of the most heavily visited parks in the Nation at a peak time for visitors—the July 4th weekend.

On Sunday the Secretary will inspect the Yellowtail Reservoir, a project of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation, and see the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, which surround it. The scenic canyon area is maintained by the National Park Service for the visiting public.

The Crow Reservation borders a large part of the area, and the Secretary will inspect tribally operated recreation developments on the reservoir shores.

The symbolic peace pipe ceremony will symbolize his commitment to the Indian concept of a national life in peace and harmony with nature. Secretary Hickel then will be adopted into the Crow Tribe.

The Crow Reservation has an Indian population of almost 4,000. In addition, to its recreational enterprises, the tribe has helped establish a carpet factory. There is traditional farm and ranch employment and there are Crow Indians working also at an Alfalfa pellet mill and at arts and crafts production.

Secretary Hickel will return to Washington, D.C. via Denver Monday, July 6.