Media Contact: Office of the Secretary
For Immediate Release: April 19, 1971
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Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton today addressed a group of 21 teachers of Indians from 14 states who were attending a workshop in environmental education at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington D. C., and Catoctin National Park Maryland.

The program, part of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Earth week celebration, was designed in cooperation with the National Park Service. It climaxes a series of regional workshops for BIA teachers and students that concluded last month. The Earth week Workshop opened today in Washington, D.C. and will continue through Friday, April 23rd at Catoctin National Park.

Secretary Morton's remarks were focused on the cultural tradition of American Indians who he said "viewed all living things as possessing the right thing to life." he called on teachers of Indian children to help their pupils assume the role of "action people in our national effort to improve the environment."

"I can think of no approach to modern education that will have more lasting meaning for school children then one which relates an examination of their environment to other spheres of human knowledge," he said.

"It is appropriate and gratifying that Indians are among the first to relate ecologically concerns to their educational objectives," he continued "their history, religion and philosophy all reflect within nature. In this sense one might call Indians the "first environmentalists."

The teachers, he added are "Pioneers on a new frontier of learning."

Director of the National Park Service George B. Hartzog, also addressed to the group during the opening session, pledging continuing National Park Service assistance in making National Park facilities are available for the Environmental Education effort.

The secretary was introduced by Miss Wilms Victor, Choctaw Indian and former BIA educator recently appointed to his Special Assistant for Indian Affairs

Also in attendance were Educators and environmentalists from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the National Park Service.

The environmental approach to teaching being developed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs relies upon study materials developed in cooperation with the Park Service NEED (National Environmental Education development) program and the companion NESA (National Environmental study area) program. The Catoctin National Park provides such a study area, a setting for classes out of doors.

Bureau of Indian Affairs schools are among the first in the country to make use of the park study areas. About 53,000 descendants of the "first environmentalists" currently involved in environmental agent studies in their classrooms and outdoor study areas.

With the conclusion of the school year is series of environmental awards for noteworthy projects any

Indian schools and communities will be presented incorporation with Indian tribal school board officials.