Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall announced today submission to Congress of a proposed bill to authorize disposition of close to $4 million to pay off an Indian Claims Commission judgment to the Creek Nation of Indians.

In September 1962, the Commission awarded $3,913,000 to the Oklahoma Creeks and to the Eastern Creeks, a group scattered throughout areas east of the Mississippi River.

Congress appropriated the money in 1965, and it has been drawing interest while details of the necessary legislation for disposition were worked out. Still to be determined are the final amounts of some costs to be paid from the judgment funds.

The award represents payment for almost 9 million acres of land in Alabama and Georgia, ceded under an 1814 treaty, when the United States wished to move the Creeks west of the Mississippi. As the move was voluntary, those Indians who wanted to stay were given patent to lands in return for territorial rights.

The Oklahoma Creeks moved into the "Indian Territory" west of the Mississippi and were dealt with as a nation with a principal chief, until the area became a state in 1907, and a limited tribal organization continues to function. Blood descendants of these Oklahoma Creeks are today estimated to total between 35,000 and 40,000.

Meanwhile, the Eastern Creeks became citizens of the United States, many descendants making their homes in southern Alabama, Florida and Mississippi. Upwards of 10,000 persons are believed able to trace their ancestry to this group.

Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert L. Bennett again underscored an announcement he made late last year that no roll can be prepared until Congress authorizes such action. He emphasized that there will be no charge for such enrollments.

The proposed legislation calls for preparation of a current roll of lineal descendants of the Creek Nation as it existed in 1814 and provides for per capita payments to such individuals.

The Eastern Creeks in establishing eligibility would be obliged to depend on various records required by the Federal Government which are known to be official and authentic, and some of these may be difficult to obtain, it was pointed out to Congress. Few such problems are anticipated with the Oklahoma Creeks, whose records were kept by the Government, including an official, final roll in 1907.