Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians and the Kaw Nation are the Latest Tribes Cleared to Process Economic Development Leases without BIA Approval

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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Washington, D.C. – Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Kevin K. Washburn announced today that the Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians and the Kaw Nation are the latest tribes to receive clearance of tribal leasing codes to enable them to handle leasing of their own Indian lands without having to obtain the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) approval.

The clearance came under the Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Homeownership Act (HEARTH Act), signed by President Obama in July 2012.

“The very essence of self-determination is that it should be the tribe that decides how its lands may be used for the good of its members, and that is what the HEARTH Act does,” said Assistant Secretary Washburn. “These efforts can have a real impact on economic development in Indian country. These initiatives help strengthen tribal self-reliance and secure the well-being of future generations.”

The Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians located in Alpine, California, will use the authority for business site leases for general economic development.

“It’s wonderful that we’ll be able to speed up the approval process in managing our leases and leasing our lands to begin economic development,” said Chairman Robert Pinto Sr., Chairman of the Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians. “I thank the Interior Department for applying their resources and hard work necessary to put our tribe on the road to self-sufficiency.”

The Kaw Nation located in Kaw City, Oklahoma, plans to authorize leases for business sites and to develop renewable energy projects.

“The HEARTH Act provides us with the ability to make decisions and see them through without delays that in the past have caused us to lose opportunities,” said Chairman Guy Munroe,Chairman of the Kaw Nation. “We have several projects for which we can now expedite the implementation and move forward with needed economic development.”

The HEARTH Act restores the authority of federally recognized tribes to develop and implement their own laws governing the long-term leasing of Indian lands for residential, business, renewable energy and other purposes. Upon one-time approval of these tribal regulations by the Department of the Interior, tribes have the authority to process land leases without BIA approval, greatly expediting the approval of leases for homes and small businesses in Indian Country.

To date, Interior has approved eight tribal leasing codes under the HEARTH Act. In November,

Secretary Jewell and Assistant Secretary Washburn traveled to Oklahoma to sign an agreement with Citizen Potawatomi Nation to help spur investment and commercial development.

The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Interior Department's trust responsibilities and promoting self-determination on behalf of the 566 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments. The Assistant Secretary oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education