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WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs David W. Anderson today announced he has named William F. Benjamin as regional director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Great Plains Regional Office in Aberdeen, S.D. The appointment was effective May 16, 2004. Benjamin, who is an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe of Montana, comes to his appointment after having served as deputy regional director of the bureau's Rocky Mountain Regional Office in Billings, Mont.

"I am very pleased that Bill Benjamin will be taking the helm at our Great Plains Regional Office," Anderson said. "His level of knowledge, as well as his extensive programmatic and managerial experience, will ensure that the BIA will fulfill its commitment to providing quality service to its customers."

As deputy regional director, Benjamin was responsible for overseeing the day-to-day program and administrative operations for the BIA regional office including trust and human services programs, administration and personnel, environmental services, safety programs, facilities management and information resources, as well as working with tribal and state governments and other federal agencies. During his tenure Benjamin also has served on several Federal water rights negotiation teams dealing with tribal-state water rights compacts; worked to resolve conflicts between a Montana tribe, federal agencies and private lenders to provide housing mortgages to tribal members; worked with irrigation water users to resolve water supply and water rights issues; and forged productive relationships with tribal leaders, state officials, federal representatives and members of the public.

Benjamin has built a 27-year career with the bureau starting in 1977 as a loan specialist with the Billings Area Office (now called the Rocky Mountain Regional Office). Prior to that time, he had worked in the private sector where he spent several years first as a high school teacher in Montana (1966 – 1969) and then with the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America (1969 – 1977) where he directed recruiting programs for American Indians on reservations throughout the western United States. He later served as finance director for the organization's office in Great Falls, Mont.

From 1977 on Benjamin worked successfully in a series of positions dealing with human service programs and budget and finance functions at the agency and area office (now regional office) levels within the BIA. He served as a tribal programs specialist in the bureau's Fort Belknap Agency in Harlem, Mont. (1977 – 1978); held budget and finance positions with the Billings Area Office (1978 – 1993); served a temporary assignment as a supervisory accountant with the BIA's Division of Accounting Management (DAM) in Albuquerque, N.M. (1992); rose to the level of area supervisory accountant with the Billings office; and was promoted to chief of DAM's payments branch in Albuquerque (1993 – 1996) prior to his becoming deputy regional director in the Rocky Mountain office.

Benjamin also has successfully completed the Federal Executive Potential Training Program (1991 – 1992) and the Interior Department's Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Program (2000 – 2001). Benjamin, who was born and raised in Browning, Mont., on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, is a 1960 graduate of Browning High School. Following a course of study in accounting, economics and business law at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, he continued his education at

Eastern Montana College where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in business education, with a major in accounting, in 1966.