Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Aurene Martin today announced her final decision to acknowledge that the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation exists as an Indian tribe within the meaning of Federal law. The Schaghticoke Tribal Nation, as defined in the Assistant Secretary's final determination, meets the regulatory requirements for a government-to-government relationship with the United States.

The Schaghticoke Tribal Nation, as acknowledged, has over 300 members and is located near Kent, Conn., on a reservation established by the Colony of Connecticut in 1737 and confirmed in 1752 – a period of 278 years. The newly acknowledged tribe meets all the mandatory criteria under 25 CFR Part 83, the Federal acknowledgment regulations. The Schaghticoke Tribal Nation has demonstrated continuous existence as an Indian tribe and a notice of the decision will be published in the Federal Register.

This decision is issued under a court approved negotiated agreement which supercedes certain provisions of the Federal acknowledgment regulations. Several lawsuits concerning the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation are pending. The Schaghticoke Tribal Nation filed two lawsuits under the Non-Intercourse Act. A third lawsuit filed by the United States seeks to condemn certain lands on the Schaghticoke Reservation, under eminent domain, to become part of the Appalachian Trail. All three lawsuits involve the question of whether the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation is an Indian tribe under Federal law.

The State of Connecticut, through the Offices of the Governor and Attorney General, the Connecticut Light & Power Company, Kent School Corporation, the Town of Kent, and the Housatonic Valley Coalition consisting of the City of Danbury and the Towns of Bethel, Brookfield, New Fairfield, Newtown, and Ridgefield, Conn., and others have participated in the administrative process before the Department of the Interior.

The Schaghticoke Tribal Nation evolved from the Weantinock and Potatuck tribes that existed at the time of the first sustained contact of the Indians of northwestern Connecticut with non-Indian settlers. Connecticut appointed an overseer for the group in 1757 and maintained oversight continuously until the present. The Schaghticoke have been identified as an Indian entity since the early 1740's to the present. The tribe has maintained a community exercising political influence over its members from first sustained contact with non-Indians to the present. Members of the newly acknowledged tribe descend from persons identified by State and Federal records as members of the historical Schaghticoke tribe.

The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Interior Department's trust responsibilities and promoting self-determination on behalf of the 562 Federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments. The Assistant Secretary also oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs, an agency with 10,500 employees nationwide, which is responsible for providing services to approximately 1.8 million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the Federally recognized tribes, and the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA), which is responsible for administering the Federal Acknowledgment Process.