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Secretary of the Interior Don Hodel has signed into existence a Royalty Management Advisory Committee, a key element of the Department's action plan to improve the processing of mineral royalties collected on federal and Indian lands.

"The committee members will represent those parties directly affected by the federal Royalty Management Program --the States, Indian Tribes, and individual Indians who receive royalty payments, as well as industry and the general public," Hodel said. "They will be an invaluable and well qualified source of guidance for me on matters that concern royalty participants."

The establishment of the committee is one of the major steps called for in the Department's recently announced Royalty Management Action Plan, which is aimed at providing quicker, more efficient and accurate processing of mineral revenues from federal and Indian leases. The Department's Minerals Management Service (MMS) is responsible for handling these revenues, which in 1984 amounted to more than $9 billion.

"It's very important to get the committee in place and functioning as soon as possible," Hodel said. "It’s advice will help tremendously in implementing other elements of the action plan."

Other features of the action plan include the installation of a new computer system to improve accounting, the establishment of a Lease Management Board to review all Departmental lease management policies, and steps to improve relations with States and Indian Tribes. According to its charter, the committee will initially address such issues as future systems design, funding guidelines for programs that delegate auditing authority to State and Indian governments, and product valuation regulations.

The committee will have no more than 31 members, who will serve on a non-reimbursable basis. Recommendations for membership are being solicited by the Department from affected States, Indian Tribes, industry, and the public. The nominating process is expected to be completed by August 31, and the first meeting of the committee may be held as early as October.