Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Mark Stephenson (O) 202/208-6416
For Immediate Release: June 10, 1991
Print PDF

Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan today announced that he would authorize the call for elections in the Native Villages of Circle, Seldovia and Port Graham to approve constitutions proposed under the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA).

Once the elections are held, the Secretary will have 45 days under the IRA to approve the constitutions.

Once the constitutions are ratified, and the Secretary approves, a certificate of approval will be appended to each constitution. The certificates of approval will contain disclaimers stating that the approval of the constitution is not intended to validate any assertion that the Native Villages have governmental authority over land or non-members.

Citing the questions that remain concerning the extent of territorial jurisdiction claimed by the Villages, the Secretary asked the Solicitor of the Department to undertake an independent legal review of the these assertions. Lujan noted that pending litigation may affect the outcome of the review.

The Secretary said he decided to proceed with the authorization of elections while fully informing the Villages of his concerns. If the language in their constitutions is inconsistent with the results of the Solicitor's legal opinion, any court decision directly oi point, or any subsequent Act of Congress, the Secretary said he shall advise the Villages and take appropriate action.