Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Secretary of the Interior James Watt announced today that Roy H. Sampsel, a Choctaw Indian from Portland, Oregon, has been appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior.

Sampsel has worked in Indian Affairs as a consultant, as executive director of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, as a reservation program officer for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and as a special assistant to the Secretary of the Interior.

"We are fortunate to have a person with the wide range of experience, especially in Indian affairs, that Sampsel has to his credit," Watt said. "He will be looked to for policy advice in all areas of Indian affairs in the days ahead."

Ken Smith, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs said that he plans to operate, "for the time being at least," with a two-deputy system -- one to handle day-to-day operations of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the other to work on policy matters. Sampsel will be the deputy for policy matters, Smith said.

Sampsel has had his own consulting firm since 1978 and has been involved 1n working with various Indian tribes and tribal business enterprises in natural resource development, community planning, communications/information development, education/training and other management programs to further tribal self-sufficiency.

A graduate of Portland State University, Sampsel was executive director of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission 1977-78. He was reservations program officer in the Portland Area Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs 1976-77 and a special assistant to the Secretary of the Interior 1973-76.

Sampsel, an army veteran, also served as a public information officer in the Interior Department, an administrative assistant for the majority leader of the Oregon House of Representatives and as field representative for Oregon's U.S. Senator Robert W. Packwood. Sampsel was born in 1941 in Joplin, Missouri, but has lived most of his life in the Portland area.

Smith said that he planned to fill the other deputy position (for operations) within 60 days. On May 15 he appointed Ken Payton, a career BIA official, to fill this position on an acting basis.