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Interior Secretary James Watt said today that President Reagan had announced his intention to nominate Kenneth L. Smith, a member of the Wasco Tribe of Oregon, to be Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, subject to Senate confirmation.

"Ken Smith is a vigorous and highly qualified tribal leader who has worked effectively at the local and national level to improve the economic and social position of Indians in our society," Watt said. "Smith was selected only after extensive consultation with elected tribal leaders from all across the Nation."

Smith, 46, has been general manager of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, a federally enrolled Indian organization composed of the three tribes living on the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon.

He has spent his entire adult career with the Confederated Tribes, joining the organization in 1959 and serving in various capacities including accountant and comptroller. He has been general manager since 1972.

After graduation from Madras High School, Madras, Oregon, Smith attended Oregon State University, Eastern Oregon College and was graduated from the University of Oregon in 1959 with a B.S. degree in business.

While a student in high school and in college he worked as an engineering aide and forestry aide during the summer with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Smith has served as a member of the Board of Directors of the American Indian Lawyer Training Program; Oregon State Board of Education; and the Portland Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.

He is a member of the Elks Lodge in Madras and a member of the Board of Directors of the American Indian Travel Commission, Lakewood, Colorado; the Oregon Heart Assn.; the Oregon Historical Society and the Intertribal Timber Council at Warm Springs.

Smith, born in The Dalles, Oregon, is married to the former Jeanie M. Thompson of Portland. The couple has four children.