



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: September 1, 1979

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The Crow Indians are the first Indian Tribe to receive advanced funding to plan abandoned coal mine reclamation, Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus announced today.

The Tribe will get \$156,545 to help prepare its reclamation program. The funding became available with the signing of the cooperative agreement between the Tribe and Interior's Office of Surface Mining (OSM).

"Our authorization for the expenditure of these funds under Title IV of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 is consistent with previous advance funding to coal-producing States," said Andrus. "In the State advance funding program, we have been able to give each State needed funds to plan its reclamation program with the signing of a cooperative agreement."

The Crow Tribe's Division of Natural Resources, which has been designated as the responsible agency to govern the use of the funds, will use the money to compile a general description of the reclamation activities ultimately to be conducted with money from the fund.

The funding will help the Tribe identify those lands, rivers, lakes, streams and water tables that were adversely affected by past mining practices and have not been fully reclaimed. The Crow reservation is in Southern Montana.

The Tribe's agency will also provide OSM with descriptions of problem areas and how the proposed reclamation relates to land use planning, as well as detailed information on the economic, social and environmental conditions that prevail in the Tribe's abandoned mine lands.

This information, in addition to assisting the Tribe, will help OSM develop a national priority reclamation program, and assist the Soil Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture to develop its Rural Abandoned Mine Program.

Funding for the abandoned mine land programs comes from fees paid by active coal mining operators in the Nation. They pay 35 cents a ton for coal that is surface mined; 15 cents a ton for deep-mined coal, and 10 cents a ton for lignite. Half of these fees are returned to the State or Indian Tribe once they have approved regulatory and reclamation programs.

Since October 1, 1977, when the fee collection system began, coal producers on Crow lands have paid over \$2 million into the abandoned mine lands fund -through July 30, 1979 -making the Tribe eligible for over \$1 million once it has OSM-approved regulatory and reclamation programs.

In addition to the Crow Tribe, 13 States have received advance planning funds for their reclamation programs. The States are Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Over \$2.5 million has been allocated to these States and the Crow Tribe for program development.

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