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# Secretary Jewell Announces Historic \$186 Million Settlement of Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations' Tribal Trust Lawsuit

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DURANT, Okla. – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today announced the settlement of The Chickasaw Nation and The Choctaw Nation v. The Department of the Interior, a lawsuit filed by the nations regarding the U.S. government's accounting and

management of funds and natural resources that it holds in trust for these communities. The \$186 million agreement resolves a long-standing dispute, with some of the claims dating back more than 100 years, and brings an end to protracted, vigorously contested and expensive litigation that has burdened both nations and the United States for a decade.

Secretary Jewell, Interior's Solicitor Hilary C. Tompkins, and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Lawrence S. Roberts joined Choctaw Nation Principal Chief Gary Batton, Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, and other federal and tribal officials at a commemorative signing ceremony held at the Choctaw Nation headquarters in Durant.

"Today's agreement is the latest addition to a record number of long-standing settlements resolved under this Administration," Secretary Jewell said. "This historic settlement is the start of a new chapter in our trust relationships with the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations, and underscores our commitment to fulfilling those responsibilities to Native communities across the country."

Under the settlement agreement, the United States will pay the Chickasaw Nation \$46.5 million, and the Choctaw Nation \$139.5 million. In return, the nations will dismiss their current lawsuit and forego further litigation regarding the United States' historic management or accounting of the nations' funds and natural resources held in the trust. The agreement is the fifth largest tribal trust settlement to date.

As part of the settlement, the parties agree to undertake new information-sharing procedures that will lead to improved communication concerning the management of the nations' trust funds and natural resources. The parties will also abide by alternative dispute resolution procedures to reduce the likelihood of future litigation.

"This settlement represents a significant milestone in helping solidify and improve our relationship with the United States," said Governor Anoatubby. "We respect the vital role Secretary Jewell has taken in helping make this historic settlement a reality. We are confident she will play an essential role in our efforts to continue strengthening the relationship between our governments, because we believe she has a unique appreciation for the mutual benefits of a positive government-to-government relationship."

"It is a historic occasion to have the Secretary of the Interior visit the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations. I am appreciative of having a sovereign-to-sovereign relationship between the Choctaw Nation and the United States government. It is also historic that



these three sovereigns have agreed to a settlement of the timber trust account case,” said Choctaw Chief Gary Batton. “We plan for the proceeds to be invested in our people – expanding education, creating jobs, promoting economic development and culture, as well as a portion to be invested in a sustainability fund for the future of our citizens.

“This visit marks the start of a revitalized relationship with the United States. Secretary Jewell’s presence here, coming soon after President Obama’s recent visit, also serves to reaffirm that the foundation of this relationship is government-to-government,” Chief Batton said.

The Choctaw Nation is the third largest Native American tribe in the United States, with approximately 176,000 enrolled members and 10,864 square miles of tribal lands in southeastern Oklahoma. The Chickasaw Nation has more than 60,000 enrolled members and includes 7,648 square miles of south-central Oklahoma, encompassing all or parts of 13 Oklahoma counties.

Both tribes were relocated to Oklahoma in the 1830s after being removed from their ancestral homelands in the southeastern United States. The removals became known as the Trail of Tears.

The Departments of Justice, Interior, and Treasury have been diligently engaged in settlement conversations with more than 100 litigating tribes. On April 11, 2012, the United States announced settlements with 41 tribes for at least \$1 billion. Since that time, the federal government has focused considerable, dedicated effort on the remaining tribal trust accounting and trust mismanagement cases. Including the settlement with the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations, this Administration has resolved, since October 1, 2010, breach of trust claims with a total of 86 tribes and combined value of about \$2.8 billion.

In addition, the \$3.4 billion Cobell settlement (which was approved in 2010) of individual American Indian trust mismanagement claims resolved the largest class action lawsuit in history.

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