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Our Culture Unites Us; Our Land Sustains Us; Our People are Prosperous

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Historic Announcement Requires Inclusion of Tribes in Management of Lands and Resources

Glennallen, Alaska – U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Jewell made a historic announcement at her presentation at the 50th Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) Conference on Friday, October 21, 2016, at the Carlson Center in Fairbanks, Alaska. She announced the release of [Secretarial Order No. 3342](#) requiring the Interior Department's agencies to, where possible, include tribes in the management of federal lands and resources. The Interior Department's agencies include the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and Bureau of Reclamation.

The directive will help provide a framework for tribes to have an increased meaningful and substantive role in management of Federal lands and waters and covers all 567 federally recognized tribes in the United States, not just those in Alaska. The Order recognizes that tribes have special geographical, historical, and cultural connections to Federal lands and waters, and that tribes have traditional ecological knowledge and practices regarding resource management that have been handed down through generations.

This marked Secretary Jewell's fifth official visit to Alaska; a place she called her favorite part of the world. Her speech stressed the importance of working more closely on cooperative management and tribal engagement and she specifically mentioned Deputy Secretary of the Interior Mike Connor's leadership in working with the Ahtna people to develop a Cooperative Management Agreement for the Ahtna region.

"We recognize that the hunting pressure and fierce competition that the Ahtna communities experience to provide moose and caribou for their families on traditional lands has been challenging," she said. "While I don't have anything to announce today, I'm very hopeful we can reach a formal agreement soon that provides Ahtna with a greater role in managing their traditional resources and one that can lead to a greater abundance of wildlife in the future." Her mention of a potential Ahtna agreement brought cheers and applause from the AFN crowd.

"This kind of collaboration with tribal nations can help ensure that we are appropriately and genuinely integrating indigenous expertise, experience and perspectives into management of federal lands and waters," she said.

At the end of her emotional speech, AFN President Julie Kitka, on behalf of the AFN delegates, presented the Secretary with a baleen scrimshaw carving of subsistence hero, and Ahtna shareholder, the late Katie John. The carving was meant to serve as a reminder of those whose lives revolve around subsistence.

"We appreciate the work that Secretary Jewell and Deputy Secretary Connor have done to increase Native peoples' role in management of lands and resources. The announcement comes at a time when we expect to see food shortages in our region due to weak salmon runs and a substantial increase in competition for limited game resources such as moose and caribou. The State managed moose hunt permits a take of 100 moose with over 3,000 hunters in the Ahtna region, and no assurance that the Ahtna people will have enough customary and traditional foods. Something must change and this directive is a step in the right direction," said Ahtna, Inc. Chairman Nicholas Jackson.

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The directive does not make tribes co-managers, but instead requires federal land managers to consult with tribes and develop new ways to make Native people partners in managing fish and wildlife, cultural sites, plant collection and public information.

“The Secretaries announcement was groundbreaking, but as she urged, we must continue the momentum we have gained with the new administration and make sure they are held accountable. We will continue to fight for a formal Cooperative Management agreement for the Ahtna people and our hope is that it can provide a model for other tribes to adopt,” said Ahtna, Inc. President Michelle Anderson.

About Ahtna, Inc.

Ahtna, Incorporated is one of 13 Alaska Native Regional Corporations formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, and is based out of Glennallen, Alaska. The company currently has approximately 1,900 shareholders, the majority of whom are of Ahtna Athabascan descent, and employs more than 1,700 people worldwide. A premiere Alaskan-owned business, Ahtna, Incorporated is guided by its vision statement: “Our Culture Unites Us; Our Land Sustains Us; Our People are Prosperous.”

To learn more visit www.ahtna-inc.com and to receive the latest news and updates don't forget to follow us on Facebook.

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