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**MMS ESTABLISHES INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FOR INDIAN
TRIBES WITH MINERAL RESOURCES**

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today announced a special royalty internship program, designed exclusively for Indian Tribes with mineral resources on tribal lands.

"This innovative program will enhance the ability of a tribe to educate their employees about royalty management functions and activities," declared MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman. "Although some classroom training will take place, most of the program entails on-the-job work assignments with MMS involving such activities as document processing, funds deposits, internal controls, disbursement and distribution, debt collection, product valuation, and audit."

Quarterman noted that while provisions of the Federal Oil and Gas Royalty Management Act permit tribes to perform audit work, "this innovation will provide tribes the opportunity to learn about all facets of the royalty management program, thereby enabling them to make informed decisions concerning the assumption of functions currently performed for them by the federal government. The Interior Department is committed to providing opportunities for tribes to manage their own affairs."

The program is aimed at mineral-producing tribes who are considering self-governance or self-determination contracts, and at tribes who want to become more knowledgeable about how their royalties are managed.

"Training will begin with an employee of the Cherokee Nation," said Quarterman, "but we're discussing the program with other tribes including the Crow, Chippewa Cree, Hopi, the Arapaho and Shoshone of the Wind River Reservation, and the Alabama Coushatta, as well as the Navajo Nation."

The Indian Self Determination Act and the Indian Self Governance Act give tribes authority to plan, conduct, consolidate and administer (through contracts or annual funding agreements) certain functions, programs, activities, or services.

Responsibility for overseeing mineral revenue activities related to Indian land is shared by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the MMS. Revenues collected by MMS for Indian leases are distributed to 29 tribes and more than 29,000 individual allottees through the BIA. In 1996, more than \$160 million was accounted for by MMS for Indian tribes and allottees.

MMS is the federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf, and collects, accounts for, and disburses about \$4 billion yearly in revenues from offshore federal mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.