



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Bureau of Indian Affairs

For Immediate Release: June 30, 1960

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A majority of the 215 adult Indians of the Catawba Tribe of South Carolina have now indicated their agreement to a division of the tribal assets among themselves as provided in a law enacted last September and a notice of this fact will be published in the Federal Register shortly, Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton announced today.

Upon publication of the notice, Secretary Seaton added, the membership roll of the tribe will be closed at midnight thereafter and the provisions of Public Law 86-322 will go into effect.

The property to be divided among the tribal members has been estimated to have a value of about \$250,000. It consists of 3,388.8 acres of land under Federal trusteeship in York County, S. C., near Rock Hill; a tribal herd of 85 beef cattle; approximately 6,500,000 board feet of timber; and nearly \$5,000 of cash on deposit with the United States Treasury.

Public Law 86-322, approved September 21, 1959, was so drafted that it becomes effective on publication of a Secretarial notice that a majority of the adult tribal members, according to the most reliable information regarding membership available to the Secretary of the Interior, have indicated their agreement to the property division.

The best information the Department has on tribal membership, Secretary Seaton said, is based on a roll prepared by the State of South Carolina dated July 1, 1943. Using this roll as a base, the Department has found that there were 215 adult Catawbas on February 2, 1960. Of this number, 127 have filed with the Department witnessed individual statements accepting the provisions of Public Law 86-322 and 117 of these signatures have been verified either by notarization or through a mail recheck with the signers.

Under the law the tribal council is authorized to designate any part of the tribe's land that is to be set aside for church, park, cemetery or playground purposes and to select trustees or agencies who will hold such tracts for the benefit of the group. All other property will be appraised by the Department and the share of each member will be determined by dividing the number of enrolled members into the total appraisal. Members who have received an assignment or use right in a particular tract of tribal land may apply their distributive shares to the acquisition of the tract on the basis of its current appraised value. Tribal lands not distributed in this way may be selected and acquired by other tribal members in the same manner.

All tribal lands in Federal trusteeship not disposed of under this procedure and all other tribal assets are to be sold by the Department and the proceeds distributed to the members in accordance with their respective shares.

Secretary Seaton indicated that a special administrator will be appointed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the near future to work directly with the Catawba people in carrying out the provisions of Public Law 86-322. As authorized in the law, a special program of education and training will be undertaken to help the tribal members in preparing to conduct their own affairs and assume their

responsibilities as citizens without special services because of their status as Indians.

The Catawba Indians have received services for many years from the State of South Carolina but have only a relatively short history of special relationships with the Federal Government. Under a 1943 agreement among the Tribe, the State, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the land now held in Federal trusteeship was bought for the Tribe by the State and conveyed to the United States in 1945. In addition, the tribe has had for many years a reservation of one square mile which is held in trust by the State. This is not affected by Public Law 86-322 unless the State Legislature takes action to have it included in the distribution plan. So far no such action has been taken.

<https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/opa/online-press-release/majority-catawba-indians-favor-division-tribal-assets>