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EPA Announces Settlement with the Department of the Interior to Resolve Violations at DOI Schools in Indian Country

Comprehensive settlement to improve environmental conditions at 164 DOI schools in Indian Country, benefitting more than 40,000 students

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today announced a comprehensive settlement with the Department of the Interior (DOI) to address alleged violations of waste, water, air, toxics and community right-to-know laws at schools and public water systems in Indian Country owned, operated, or the legal responsibility of DOI's Indian Affairs Office. The settlement will protect student's health and the health of communities in Indian Country by reducing potential exposure to environmental hazards.

"Children are more vulnerable to environmental exposures than adults, which is why ensuring that schools provide safe, healthy learning environments for our children, particularly in tribal communities, is a top priority for EPA," said Cynthia Giles, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. "Today's landmark settlement will help strengthen public health and environmental protection in Indian Country and will improve environmental management practices at federally managed tribal schools."

Under the settlement, the DOI's Indian Affairs Office, comprised of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), will correct all of the alleged violations at 72 schools and 27 water systems. DOI will implement an environmental compliance auditing program and an environmental management system (EMS), designed to improve environmental practices at all of its BIE schools and BIA public water systems serving these schools. DOI has also agreed to install a solar energy system which will serve a school located in the Grand Canyon. The solar energy project will help ensure a more reliable source of electricity for the school and local community. DOI will also pay a civil penalty of \$234,844 which it must spend to correct violations of the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) at its schools.

EPA conducted compliance inspections and data reviews at more than 100 BIE/BIA schools and public water systems. The settlement addresses all alleged violations under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Emergency Planning and Community-Right-to-Know Act, the Toxic Substances Control Act's PCB provisions, and AHERA.

The settlement affects 60 tribes throughout the U.S. which have DOI Office of Indian Affairs schools or public water systems on or near their tribal lands. Consistent with EPA's consultation process with tribes, EPA consulted with the 60 tribes affected prior to finalization of the settlement agreement.

More information on the settlement: <http://epa.gov/compliance/federalfacilities/enforcement/civil/bia-settlement.html>

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