

For immediate release
May 17, 2016

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Application process, eligibility announced for \$38 million *Keepseagle* grants distribution

Fast-track registration opens May 25, applications close June 24

WASHINGTON D.C. – Class counsel in the *Keepseagle v. Vilsack* settlement today announced details about the Native American Agricultural Fast Track Fund (NAAFTF), a one-time distribution of \$38 million in settlement funds. Awards from this fund will be made on a competitive basis to non-profit organizations, tribal programs and educational institutions which provide agricultural, business, technical or advocacy services to existing and aspiring Native American farmers and ranchers.

“Among the far-reaching benefits of the *Keepseagle* settlement is the means for organizations which have a track record of supporting Native American farmers and ranchers to deliver valuable assistance to promote their continued engagement in agriculture -- an important component of the economy in Indian Country,” said Joseph M. Sellers, lead counsel for the plaintiff class. “The Fast Track Fund will make vital resources available to these important efforts by the end of this year.”

The NAAFTF award process begins with a one-month period for letters of intent applications to be submitted to determine eligibility (after review, eligible applicants will be invited to submit full proposals). This first step starts May 25 at 12:00 p.m. MDT, when registration, application materials, and further process details and a timeline are made available at www.indianfarmclass.com/NAAFTF.aspx. An applicant must submit a letter-of-intent application no later than Friday, June 24, 2016, by 5:00 p.m. MDT. Technical assistance relating strictly to the application process will be available by dedicated phone and email contacts.

To be eligible, an applicant organization must document that it provided agricultural, business, technical or advocacy services to Native American farmers or ranchers between January 1, 1981, and November 1, 2010; is based in the United States; and is one of the following:

- 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization
- 7871 designation as a non-profit organization chartered under the tribal law of a state or federally recognized tribe
- An educational institution described in 170(b)(1)(A)(ii)

- An instrumentality of a state or federally recognized tribe, designated under 7701(a)(40)

An applicant organization must propose its use of award funds to provide assistance designed to further Native American farming or ranching activities. Litigation, lobbying or political activities will not be eligible for funding.

The letter-of-intent application must include a description of the applicant organization, demonstrate eligibility through required documentation of a tribal or board resolution, the purpose for which funding is being sought, the applicant organization's total annual operating budget, total project costs (if applicable), and requested amount.

An advisory committee will review the letters-of-intent applications and issue an invitation to selected organizations for full proposals on July 28, 2016.

The process will be managed under the supervision of class counsel by Echo Hawk Consulting. Class counsel will make recommendations to the Court, based on input from the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee is comprised of six individuals with experience and expertise in the fields of Native American farming, ranching and philanthropy. All awards are subject to Court approval. Awards will range in size depending on an organization's or tribe's budget, focus and scope. NAAFTF will consider as well applications from intermediary organizations having existing, relevant grant programs which can be expanded through awards.

Background

On April 20, 2016, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia approved a modification to the *Keepseagle* settlement agreement, which included a process for the distribution of funds to cy pres beneficiaries. The modification to the settlement also provides for additional damage awards to be paid to prevailing claimants. The remaining funds, approximately \$265 million, will go to a Trust that will distribute funds at the direction of an independent board of trustees for up to 20 years. NAAFTF is separate from the Trust, and is designed to ensure that a substantial portion of the remaining funds are distributed to qualifying organizations much more quickly than the Trust will be able to begin making grants.

NAAFTF was created to make awards to such organizations already involved in supporting Native American ranchers and farmers before the original *Keepseagle* settlement was agreed to in 2010.

The Court's order is open to appeal through June 20, 2016. If an appeal is filed, the grant process will be suspended until a decision on the appeal is rendered.

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