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ACTION REPORTS

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Indian Water Rights Office in D.C. -

Principal Features Beginning to Take Shape

WASHINGTON, D.C. - (AIPA)—Principal features of the Indian Bureau's Indian Water Rights Office announced on Oct 4 are taking shape and personnel assignments will be announced shortly.

Interior—Bureau liaison William Rogers in a memorandum to Commissioner Louis R. Bruce submitted the names of James Hena (Pueblo), Atty. Browning Pipestem (Oto) and BIA special assistant Arthur Gajarsa as candidates to head the office.

The office was created by the Interior Department in the wake of a public outcry protesting the transfer of water rights authority William H. Veeder to the Phoenix Office. That transfer has

since been rescinded.

Created to fill an advocacy vacuum until the Nixon Trust Counsel Authority Bill is signed into law (hearings on the proposed legislation have been set Nov. 22-23), the office will operate on a first-year budget of \$2 million.

Liaison Rogers told AIPA that while he was not at liberty to disclose where the \$2 million would originate, the sum would be derived in part from existing allocation in the 1972 budget.

In a memorandum to the Interior Secretary dated Oct. 18, Deputy Commissioner John O. Crow outlined the responsibilities and functions of the office.

It will identify water rights

problems, develop relevant technical data, initiate corrective actions in strategic areas, prepare timely defense suits for submission to the Justice Department for filing in the courts, and provide direct technical assistance to field teams working exclusively in the Indian water rights area.

Staffed by participants from the Interior Solicitor's Office, the Geological Survey and the BIA, the office in addition will utilize the professional skills of attorneys, geologists, hydrologists, natural resource specialists and engineers.

An advisory board selected by the National Tribal Chairmen's Association will provide direct guidance to the office.

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