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GENERAL MEMORANDUM 10-032

EPA Establishes New Office of International and Tribal Affairs

On March 16, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson announced an internal realignment that results in a new Office of International and Tribal Affairs (OITA). The OITA joins the former American Indian Environmental Office (AIEO) with the Office of International Affairs. The AIEO was previously under EPA's Office of Water.

In announcing the restructuring, Administrator Jackson stated the change "ensures that we [EPA] approach our relationship with the sovereign tribal nations within our own country in the same way we approach our relationship with sovereign nations beyond U.S. borders." The announcement also states that the action was in response to tribal requests for reconsideration of the AIEO within the hierarchy of the EPA, and in consultation with the National Tribal Caucus and EPA leadership.

Regarding the restructuring, OITA Assistant Administrator Michelle DePass stated: "Tribes and tribal lands face disproportionate environmental and public health concerns. It is my honor to assume leadership of the [AIEO]—and I look forward to working with tribal communities as partners in overall efforts to address these pressing issues."

Ms. DePass was confirmed by the Senate to her position at the EPA in April 2009. Prior to her EPA appointment, she served as the Environment and Community Development Program Officer at the Ford Foundation. She holds a B.A. in Political Science from Tufts University, a law degree from Fordham University School of Law, and a Master's degree in Public Administration from Baruch College School of Public Affairs.

Please let us know if we may provide additional information or assistance regarding the matters reported on in this Memorandum.

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