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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas

Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia'aina to Make First Official Visit to the Federated States of Micronesia

*Visiting Pohnpei State to Meet with FSM President, National and State Leadership
to Discuss Typhoon Recovery, Compact Priorities, Economic Development, and
Climate Change Impacts*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 4, 2015) - The U.S. Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia'aina will visit Pohnpei State, the capitol of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), from June 8 to June 11, 2015, to meet with the President of the Federated States of Micronesia, Speaker of the FSM Congress, Pohnpei State Governor, and other national and state government officials. Her meetings will cover topics to include priorities under the Compact of Free Association with the FSM, typhoon recovery, economic development, Compact Impact and Climate Change.

This will be the Assistant Secretary's first official visit to the Federated States of Micronesia in her current capacity, although she did visit Pohnpei in 1996, as part of a Congressional visit when she accompanied former Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Frank Murkowski of Alaska and former U.S. Senator Daniel Akaka of Hawaii. She has worked for many years on issues directly affecting the Federated States of Micronesia as a staff member of the U.S. Congress. The Assistant Secretary also has a connection to Pohnpei through her great-great-grandfather, Samuel Kamakahiki, from Keanae, Maui, who served as a missionary on Pohnpei in 1855.

"The ties we share with the Federated States of Micronesia are enshrined in the Compact of Free Association, but go beyond Compact grant funding. It is historical and cultural," said Assistant Secretary Kia'aina. "Not only do we now share a history since sacrifices made in World War II, we are further bound by the service of hundreds of FSM citizens who are proudly serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, have served or have given the ultimate sacrifice for freedom and democracy. Given that the FSM has the largest population among our three Compact relationships in the

Pacific, it is vital that we double down on our efforts to improve the effectiveness of not only health and education grant funding provided under the Compact of Free Association, but all funding.”

Assistant Secretary Kia’aina will be in Pohnpei from June 8 – 11, where she will meet with FSM President Peter M. Christian, Speaker of the FSM National Congress Wesley Simina, Pohnpei Governor John Ehsa and other leaders from both the national and state governments. Her activities on Pohnpei will include visits with conservation and women’s organizations to discuss local environment and organization efforts, a trip to the ancient historic ruins of Nan Madol and the International Organization for Migration to discuss typhoon recovery efforts and Compact Impact issues. The Assistant Secretary will also meet briefly with Governor Johnson Elimo of Chuuk State and other officials in transit through Chuuk.

Assistant Secretary Kia’aina ends her trip with a stop in Honolulu to meet with Hawaii Governor David Ige and members of his cabinet to discuss her initiatives and work towards mitigating the impacts of Compact migration to the State of Hawaii. She will be accompanied by representatives from Hawaii congressional offices, and non-governmental organizations (NGO) Partners in Development Foundation and We Are Oceania, a Native Hawaiian-Micronesian NGO partnership whose goal is to stand up a Micronesian One-Stop Center in Hawaii, run by Micronesians to serve Micronesians in Hawaii.

The Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas carries out the administrative responsibilities of the Secretary of the Interior in coordinating federal policy for the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and administering and overseeing U.S. federal assistance to the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau under the Compacts of Free Association. The Assistant Secretary executes these responsibilities through the Office of Insular Affairs.

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