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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas

Assistant Secretary Esther Kia'aina to Confer with CNMI Leaders on Workforce and Economic Development, Attend Ground Breaking for Puerto Rico Parkland Conversion

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 27, 2015) - The U.S. Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia'aina will visit the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) from May 31 to June 1, to meet with CNMI Governor Eloy Inos and CNMI Department of Labor Secretary Edith DeLeon Guerrero and the CNMI Workforce Committee to discuss workforce development strategies. Assistant Secretary Kia'aina and CNMI leadership will also discuss topics such as immigration, climate change, military training, and economic development. Assistant Secretary Kia'aina will also meet with the Mayor of the Northern Islands Jerome K. Aldan and Tinian Mayor Joey San Nicolas. While in the CNMI, the Assistant Secretary will also attend the ground-breaking ceremony for the capital improvement project to convert the former Puerto Rico Dump into public parkland.

"I commend Governor Inos and his team as well as my staff who have worked so hard for so long to get the Puerto Rico Dump project finally off the ground," said Assistant Secretary Kia'aina. "One of the largest capital improvement projects funded through the Office of Insular Affairs at over \$25 million, this site has taken its toll on the environment, the economy and, most importantly, the health of the community. I myself have known about this landfill since I was working for Congress; the Dump was lower than the tangan tangan trees back then. I am honored to join you as we celebrate the closure of this landfill and the opening of a beautiful park for the community to enjoy."

The ground-breaking at the Puerto Rico site on the northwestern coast of Garapan marks the beginning of the first phase of a multi-million federal grant to stabilize and seal the solid waste landfill in accordance with an agreement between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the CNMI government. Located adjacent to Able Dock and Saipan Harbor and bordered by Tanapag Lagoon, the site was used for the disposal of nonhazardous solid waste between 1950

and 2003. The conversion work will reduce migration of contaminated water into the lagoon, protect the toe and slopes of the dump from erosion, control storm-water, collect and safely treat or vent landfill gas, and provide public parkland.

WHO: Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia'aina

WHAT: Confer with CNMI leaders and attend the ground breaking ceremony for Puerto Rico parkland conversion project

WHERE: Ceremony at Puerto Rico site adjacent to Able Dock and Saipan Harbor; Meetings at Governor's Office; Bokka Bokka Restaurant, Oleai Village; CNMI Department of Labor, Bldg 1215; and OIA Office, Marina Heights II, Marina Heights Business Park

WHEN: Monday, June 1: ceremony at 9:00 a.m.; meetings from 10:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

MEDIA: News media are invited to attend the ground breaking ceremony

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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