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Gov. Henry sets Tar Creek relocation plan in motion

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Oklahoma City – Gov. Brad Henry today set in motion the relocation of more residents in the Tar Creek Superfund site in northeastern Oklahoma. The governor announced appointments to a revamped trust authority that will oversee and administer a new, federally-funded relocation program initiated by U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe.

Sen. Inhofe recently commissioned a study on subsidence dangers in the mining communities of Picher and Cardin and obtained federal funding to help relocate residents in hazardous areas.

"We're one step closer to ending the long nightmare that families in the Tar Creek site have endured for decades," said Gov. Henry. "I have great confidence in the newly appointed trust members and am very appreciative of their willingness to serve in this historic role. With their good work and the help of Sen. Inhofe, the people in these communities are finally getting the help they need and deserve."

The state trust in question was originally established in 2004 to implement a relocation program proposed by Gov. Henry. That initiative assisted families with children aged six and younger, the population most susceptible to lead contamination in the area. The relocation program ended successfully late last year.

This legislative session, the governor asked lawmakers to revamp the trust so that it could administer a federally-funded relocation based on subsidence dangers. The change was authorized in Senate Bill 1463 by Sen. Charles Wyrick and Rep. Larry Glenn.

The new trust includes several members that served on the previous relocation panel.

"We hope to repeat the success of the first relocation program. The key is strong local input and efficient execution. The trust certainly provided that the first time around, and I know it will again," said the governor.

Trust appointees (occupation/employer and residence)

- Larry Rice (Trust chairman), assistant to the president of Tulsa University, resident of Pryor
- Ed Keheley, vice-president of Keheley and Associates, resident of Quapaw
- Dr. Mark Osborn, physician, resident of Miami*
- Bob Walker, superintendent of Picher-Cardin Schools, resident of Miami*
- Tamara Summerfield, deputy tribal administrator of Quapaw Tribe, resident of Miami*

- Mike Sexton, senior vice-president, 1st National Bank and Trust, resident of Miami
- James Thompson, attorney, resident of Miami
- Janell Trimble, Miami public schools pincipal, resident of Picher
- Rev. Charles Clevenger, pastor with Tri-State Faith Center, resident of Picher

*Served on first relocation trust