



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Selected for U.S. Department of Transportation Unmanned Aircraft Integration Pilot Program

DURANT, Okla. (May 9, 2018) – Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is proud to announce that U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao selected the Choctaw Nation as a participant for the initial Unmanned Aircraft Systems (“drone”) Integration Pilot Program (UASIPP). The 10 selectees announced today were from a competitive pool of more than 200 tribal, state and city governments.

“We are looking forward to helping today’s winners unlock the enormous potential of drone operations, which will create new services and jobs in their local communities,” said Secretary Chao.

The designation will permit the Choctaw Nation to participate in an initiative announced in October 2017 by President Trump, to begin safely testing and validating advanced operations for drones in partnership with tribal, state and local governments in select jurisdictions. Results from this Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) pilot program will be used to accelerate the safe integration of UAS into national airspace and to realize the benefits of unmanned technology in our economy.

“The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is very happy about today’s announcement, and we believe this reflects very well on our continued work and efforts to identify and grow economic opportunities for our region. We realize that this technology has the potential to change our daily lives in many positive ways,” said Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Chief Gary Batton. “This program will enable and foster technology and creativity in a safe environment.”

The initiative will tackle the most significant challenges in integrating drones into the national airspace and reduce risks to public safety and security. It is designed to provide regulatory certainty and stability for tribal, state and local governments as well as UAS owners and operators who are accepted into the program.

The program will help the U.S. Department of Transportation and FAA develop a regulatory framework that will allow more complex low-altitude operations; identify ways to balance local and national interests; improve communications with tribal, state, and

local jurisdictions; address security and privacy risks; and accelerate the approval of operations that currently require special authorizations.

“The Choctaw Nation has always supported technology innovations,” said Chief Batton. “We look forward to participating in this important UAS initiative and helping the U.S. remain globally competitive in emerging aviation technology fields. We are excited to promote job growth, economic development, and important educational opportunities for our citizens and our neighbors in southeastern Oklahoma.”

More information related to the UAS Integration Pilot Program can be found at https://www.faa.gov/uas/programs_partnerships/uas_integration_pilot_program/splash/.

About the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

The Choctaw Nation is the third largest Indian Nation in the United States with close to 200,000 tribal members and over 9,000 employees. The first tribe over the Trail of Tears, the historic boundaries are in the southeast corner of Oklahoma. The Choctaw Nation’s vision, “Living out the Chahta Spirit through faith, family and culture,” is evident as it continues to focus on providing opportunities for growth and prosperity.

For more information about the Choctaw Nation, its culture, heritage and traditions, please go to www.choctawnation.com.

CONTACT: Kristina Humenesky, Public Relations Director – Choctaw Nation, 580-380-5967, khumenesky@choctawnation.com