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Bill Graham

## **Nine atolls, islands file with Tribunal**

Nine more outer atolls and islands have filed class action land damage claims with the Nuclear Claims Tribunal, with at least three more expected to file by the end of the year.

This brings to 15 the number of class action suits filed to date.

Maloelap, Wotje, Mejit, Jaluit, Majuro, Wothe, Ailinglaplap, Lib and Lae filed claims with the Tribunal late last month, joining Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap, Utrik, Ailuk and Likiep.

The Tribunal earlier this year announced a November 30 deadline for any atoll wishing to lodge a class action claim.

Public Advocate Bill Graham told the Journal, however, that even if local governments or other leaders from outer islands do not file formal class action cases, many individuals from every atoll and island have already filed land claims since 1989. When the Tribunal begins addressing the land claims, it will not deal with claims filed by these individuals separately, but will be putting all such claims together.

The net affect of this is that “class” actions will be created for each atoll/island, whether or not leaders filed ‘official’ class action suits before the Tribunal deadline, he indicated. Majuro attorney John Masek filed claims on behalf of the Maloelap and Wotje local governments; Washington, DC-based attorney John Baringer filed a claim for Mejit Island; Ministers Alvin Jacklick and Rien Morris filed a claim for Jaluit; Mayor Riley Albertter filed a claim for Majuro Atoll; and Ebeye-based special counsel Jack Akeang filed claims on behalf of Wothe, Ailinglaplap, Lib and Lae (and is expected to file additional claims for Jabot, Ujae and Kwajalein).

The claims are very similar in wording to each other; Jaluit’s was based on Mejit’s and others are based on earlier claims filed by Likiep and Ailuk.