



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL TRUSTEE FOR AMERICAN INDIANS

Washington, D.C. 20240

SEP 27 2005

Dear Tribal Leader,

As you know, since the passage of the American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act of 1994, the Department of the Interior (Interior) has undertaken efforts to improve the management of the Indian Trust for future generations. We at Interior are working to be more effective in disseminating timely and accurate information about Interior's management of the Indian Trust and the status of trust reforms underway. Along those lines, this is the first of a series of letters you will receive on a regular basis about those efforts. We are also producing brochures and materials to help disseminate information to trust beneficiaries; I've enclosed our first three brochures—*Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians: General Information*, *Withdrawing Tribal Funds from Trust* for tribes with funds held in trust at Interior and *Surveying Services*.

In 2003, Interior developed the Comprehensive Trust Management Plan (CTM) to define an approach for improving performance and accountability in the management of the trust. An outcome of the CTM was a collaborative effort between Interior and tribal representatives to develop the Fiduciary Trust Model (FTM), which was approved by Secretary Norton in 2004. The FTM lays the foundation for trust reform for future generations of American Indians. This year we began implementation of many of the FTM initiatives. These include the following:

New staff dedicated to beneficiary services. I hope that you have met and are working with your Regional Trust Administrator and Fiduciary Trust Officer. If you do not yet know these new staff members (who are in the field to work directly with beneficiaries on trust issues), please refer to the included contact list. These staff members are hosting regular outreach meetings to describe the status of trust reforms and answer questions for the Indian beneficiaries they serve. In many cases, trust officers are making themselves available at various Indian gatherings such as pow wows and feasts.

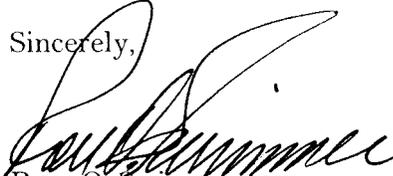
Trust Beneficiary Call Center. The Trust Beneficiary Call Center (TBCC) is a nationwide call center that is staffed with people trained in fiduciary trust management who have direct access to callers' trust resource data. This calendar year, Call Center staff has answered more than 43,000 calls. More than 91% of caller issues have been resolved within just a few minutes. We calculate that use of the toll-free Call Center has relieved Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and other Interior staff of more than 2,300 hours of contact time, and allowed program staff to dedicate this saved time to program responsibilities. To access the TBCC, call (888) 678-6836 ext. 0 to get your trust questions or concerns answered.

Lease and land-use payment collections. The Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) is working with the BIA to implement a “lockbox” process for the collection of trust payments. The new process (used by most major financial institutions) was introduced initially to the Concho and Anadarko agencies in Oklahoma in July. The lockbox operation improves the efficiency and security of trust payment collections. When fully implemented, all checks for the use of Indian Trust land will be sent to a central post office box for processing and direct posting to beneficiaries’ accounts. For more information on the lockbox, contact the TBCC.

Cadastral Surveyors. In partnership, OST, BIA, and the Bureau of Land Management are hiring twelve new cadastral surveyors to work directly with tribes and individuals to address land survey needs in Indian Country. This is the first time that surveyors have been stationed in BIA offices, dedicated solely to Indian trust land issues. We anticipate filling all surveyor positions by the end of this year. Surveyors already hired, and their regions, are listed on the enclosed contact information sheet.

Interior is continuing to implement trust reforms as guided by the FTM. (For a copy of the FTM see www.doi.gov/ost). I am proud of the strides we have taken to improve trust services for beneficiaries and tribes to date. I also recognize that there is considerable work ahead. Together, staff at Interior and tribal leaders throughout Indian Country will continue to work to improve the Indian Trust for all beneficiaries.

Sincerely,



Ross O. Swimmer

Special Trustee for American Indians

Enclosed:

- *Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians: General Information*
- *Withdrawing Tribal Funds from Trust*
- *Surveying Services*
- Contact sheets: Regional Trust Administrators, Fiduciary Trust Officers, and Indian Lands Surveyors