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OST Launches Internet-Based Pay.gov Application to Receive Indian Trust Fund Payments Online

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Department of the Interior’s Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST), in partnership with the Department of the Treasury, has launched the Internet-based Pay.gov application. Pay.gov offers the option of making Bureau of Indian Affairs lease and permit payments online.

“For lease holders, payments made via Pay.gov are faster, safer, easier and more convenient than payments by check,” said Principal Deputy Special Trustee Ray Joseph. “It’s good for Indian trust beneficiaries because faster payments mean faster disbursements to them. It’s win-win.”

Pay.gov, which was activated August 29, 2011, as a U.S. Department of Treasury site, is a secure electronic collection service provided at no cost by Treasury. Pay.gov can accept Automated Clearing House, or ACH (transferring funds directly from a bank account), payments and those made by credit card. Electronic payments are received at Treasury the same business day they are sent.

OST is processing electronic payments received through Pay.gov automatically to beneficiaries’ accounts. This reduces the risks of error and delay and enables beneficiaries to receive their lease and permit income promptly. Payments made by credit card usually take two days to post while payments made by ACH take just one day to post.

Lease and permit payments will still be accepted by check. Those payments will continue to be processed through the Trust Funds Lockbox.

Established by the American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act of 1994, OST was initially tasked with Department-wide oversight for the reform of Indian trust management and implementation of new fiduciary accounting systems. OST’s oversight role expanded in 1996 to include operational responsibility for financial trust fund management, including receipt, investment and disbursement of beneficiary funds. The Office of Appraisal Services, which appraises Indian trust lands, was moved to OST in 2002. The Office of Historical Trust Accounting was realigned in 2007 to report directly to the Special Trustee.

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The mission of OST is to perform our fiduciary trust responsibilities to American Indian tribes, individual Indians and Alaska Natives by incorporating a beneficiary focus and beneficiary participation while providing effective, competent stewardship and management of trust assets