



The Evolution of OST

The role of the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) in Indian trust reform has evolved continuously over the past decade. When OST was created in 1994, its purpose was to oversee and coordinate trust reforms throughout Interior. Today, OST, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and other Interior bureaus are key actors in the development and execution of trust programs. Since OST's inception, its staffing, responsibilities, and involvement in trust reform have evolved and grown to support changing requirements.

Since the late 1800s, the federal government has held American Indian assets in trust and collected and disbursed funds paid for the use of those assets to trust beneficiaries. The *General Allotment Act of 1887*, or the *Dawes Act*, divided Indian tribal lands into allotments that generally ranged from 40 to 160 acres and designated those allotments to individuals. If individuals leased their land, income generated from that use was collected by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the benefit of the individual allottees. This Act remained in effect until the *Indian Reorganization Act of 1934*, which ended the allotment of tribal lands. The *Indian Reorganization Act* affirmed federal management of trust assets by allowing the federal government to collect, hold and distribute Indian trust funds. The use of trust lands and the collection and distribution of income continues to be managed by Interior today (unless an account holder chooses to receive his or her income directly).

Until the Office of Trust Funds Management (OTFM) was created in 1989, Indian trust funds were managed by local BIA offices. As the trust management responsibilities and trust income grew, this local management system created inefficiencies in the national trust program. Many regions used different versions of IT systems to track the funds. OTFM was created to improve the management of trust funds.

Years later, Congress decided that additional reforms needed to be made to the Indian trust. In 1992, Congress issued a report entitled *Misplaced Trust* which detailed a number of management problems encountered with the trust. It included concerns about management of funds and lack of accountability. In 1994, largely based on the report's conclusions, Congress enacted the *American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act* which, among other things, established the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians.

"OST was created to provide oversight for the Secretary to ensure reforms took place," Special Trustee Ross Swimmer, says. The Special Trustee reports directly to the Secretary of the Interior and coordinates fiduciary trust reforms throughout Interior. OST's initial responsibility in 1994 was to improve Indian trust management and provide direction to the congressionally-



Continued on page 2.



New IT Systems Conversion Completed

On September 30, 2007, the final Bureau of Indian Affairs regions and agencies

were converted to the leasing



module of the Trust Asset and Accounting Management System (TAAMS). TAAMS is now the system of record for land title and leasing across the country.

The interface between TAAMS and TFAS also was completed. These new changes should reduce the time for distribution of funds to beneficiaries and improve the efficiency of staff performing their trust related duties. These systems and improved business practices should greatly improve the management of the Indian trust for beneficiaries and build capacity for Indian Affairs employees.

(Continued from page 1)

mandated reformation of the Indian trust. More than a decade later, OST's role has changed. OST is now recognized as a key partner with BIA and other Interior bureaus in Indian trust management.

In 1996, Congress directed the Secretary to move the financial trust functions from BIA to OST. Secretarial Order 3197 transferred the Office of Trust Funds Management to OST's jurisdiction. This transfer broadened OST's responsibilities immensely. OST was not only monitoring trust reforms, it became responsible for managing tribal and individual Indian trust fund accounts and providing financial services to beneficiaries. In time, OST implemented the Trust Funds Accounting System (TFAS), which replaced a module on BIA's Integrated Records Management System and two OST systems.

In fiscal year 2002, an agreement was established to move appraisers from BIA to OST to create a separation of duties between the realty and appraisal staff. This was meant to address the appearance that appraisers could potentially be influenced by the realty department when determining the fair market value of a trust asset.

In 2003, Interior developed the Fiduciary Trust Model (FTM), designed to improve beneficiary services and enhance trust management. The main goal of the FTM is to bring a beneficiary focused approach to Indian trust management and lessen the gap between the trustee and beneficiary. This plan led to the deployment of over 50 Fiduciary Trust Officers (FTOs) to act as local points of contact for beneficiaries. OST also created six Regional Trust Administrator positions to supervise the cadre of FTO's.

Another milestone in OST's history was the opening of the American Indian Records Repository (AIRR) in June of 2004. OST signed an agreement with the National Archives and Records Administration to establish the Indian records center. Today, more than 160,000 indexed boxes containing approximately 400 million pages of records are stored at the AIRR.

In July 2007, the Office of Historical Trust Accounting (OHTA) became the newest addition to OST. OHTA was created by Secretary Gale Norton in 2001 to focus additional resources on the historical accounting efforts. OHTA is responsible for planning, organizing, directing, and executing the historical accounting of Individual Indian Monies and tribal trust fund accounts. Previously, OHTA reported to Interior's Deputy Secretary. Today, the Executive Director of OHTA reports directly to the Special Trustee.

Today, OST has over 600 full-time employees and manages a sizeable contractor workforce. Beginning with just a handful of employees and acting as an overseer to trust reforms in 1994, today OST works closely with the BIA and other Interior personnel to manage many of the important Indian trust processes. OST is proud of the progress that has been made and will continue to work hard with its sister bureaus and offices to reform and manage the Indian trust and enhance the services provided to beneficiaries.



By the numbers in FY 2007, the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians:

- Delivered over 700,000 quarterly performance statements to beneficiaries who own trust assets. These statements provide information such as the source of funds, encumbrances (ie: leases) and a list of the property owned.
- Received over \$286 million in trust payments into the centralized lockbox and distributed more than 90% of these funds into beneficiaries' accounts within 10 business days.
- Processed more than 8 million trust transactions in beneficiaries' accounts.
- Conducted or participated in more than 2,675 outreach events across Indian Country to discuss trust reforms.
- Received more than 185,000 calls to the Trust Beneficiary Call Center.



The Trust Beneficiary Call Center: “Someone’s Always Going to be There”

Ever wonder who’s on the other end of the phone when you call the Trust Beneficiary Call Center (TBCC) or, how they know enough to quickly answer complicated questions? Call center “technicians”—the 16 thoroughly trained, hard working, and experienced people who respond to beneficiary trust fund inquiries—staff the center six days a week. They are kept very busy with the high volume of calls that flood the TBCC.

The call center has received up to 1402 calls in a single day. Technicians do not re-direct callers by subject matter. Because of this focus on beneficiary service, they must be rigorously trained and have a broad knowledge in all areas of Indian trust.

“There is so much variation in inquiries,” Bryan Marozas, Director of the TBCC, says. “The technicians need to have a thorough understanding of everything.” Marozas explains that technicians go through weeks of training before they ever go out on the floor. Once on the floor, they shadow the more experienced technicians and even answer “mock” calls to ensure they are prepared for real beneficiary questions. Technicians also keep abreast of the issues by reading about the progress of trust reforms and visiting the OST website to keep their information current.

The most common questions are about account balances or a change of address. However, plenty of questions are much more complex. Technicians are trained in TAAMS, TFAS, ProTrac, and other issues including IIM account management, and owner interests, to name a few. Questions can be complicated because account holders may have different needs and circumstances that technicians must consider when answering questions. If the call center cannot provide a sufficient answer, they escalate the inquiry to a Fiduciary Trust Officer (FTO). Only about 10% of the questions received are escalated to FTOs.

Unlike most call centers, the TBCC has an extremely low turnover rate. Over half of the current employees have been with the TBCC since its inception. Technician Rae Gatewood has been with the call center since it opened in 2004.

“Finding individuals who are considered whereabouts unknown is the most rewarding part of the job,” Gatewood says. Beneficiaries have called in and discovered they had money they never knew they were entitled to. “When we are able to locate individuals and get them the money they deserve, it’s a great feeling,” Gatewood says.

Call center technicians like Gatewood also document all calls and perform routine file maintenance requests, such as changing an address for a beneficiary’s account. Technicians perform an average of 77 routine file maintenance requests per day. Coupling that with the average 100 phone calls per day adds up to a very busy schedule.

Bryan Marozas is very proud of his team and says they give dependability to the call center. “Someone’s always going to be there,” he says. Marozas wants beneficiaries to understand that their questions will always be carefully considered and answered. Reach the Trust Beneficiary Call Center toll-free at 1-888-678-6836.



Rae Gatewood, TBCC Technician

New “Restoring Trust: The Reformation of Indian Trust Management (1994-2007)” Report Available

On October 9, 2007, OST transmitted to Congress a report entitled, *Restoring Trust: The Reformation of Indian Trust Management (1994-2007)*. This comprehensive report chronicles the history of Indian trust management, from the “Dawes Act” of 1887 to the many reform initiatives that OST and BIA employees have completed and continue to work on every day.

The report focuses on the Department of the Interior’s many accomplishments in reforming trust management since Congress passed the *American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act of 1994*, and discusses the various structural issues that continue to make managing the Indian trust a challenge.

Read a copy of the report on OST’s website at www.ost.doi.gov.

Vicki Forrest Goes to BIA



Vicki Forrest was recently appointed as the new Deputy Director of the Office of Trust Services in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Forrest previously served as Regional Trust Administrator (RTA) for the Office of the Special Trustee's (OST) Eastern Oklahoma and Pacific regions beginning in March 2004. She began her career with OST in April 2002 as an accountant. "Working to improve the lives of the Indian people has been a tenet of my professional career," Forrest said. "I am grateful for the opportunity to lead the BIA's Office of Trust Services for the benefit of all tribal and individual Indian trust beneficiaries." As Deputy Director, Forrest is responsible for all activities associated with the management and pro-

tection of federal Indian trust and restricted lands, as well as real estate services and natural resources. Forrest will be greatly missed as an RTA for OST, but her hard work will still greatly impact Indian trust beneficiaries.



Department of the Interior
Office of the Special Trustee for
American Indians
1-888-678-6836

Debit Card Pilot Program

Beginning December 2007, trust beneficiaries residing in the states of **Arizona, Oklahoma, and Washington** will have the opportunity to participate in a debit card pilot program. Instead of receiving checks for their IIM funds, these beneficiaries can choose to access their trust fund accounts electronically with a debit card, even if they don't have a bank account. Benefits of the card include:

Faster, safer and more convenient access to funds

No fees or inconvenience associated with cashing checks

Convenient way to make purchases and get cash back at merchant locations

Access to cash 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at ATMs nationwide

OST will open enrollment for this optional pilot program on December 3, 2007, for account holders in the three pilot program states.

The pilot will run until June 2008, after which it will be reviewed before being expanded nationwide. For more information contact the Trust Beneficiary Call Center toll-free at 1-888-678-6836.



Announcing OST's New Website!

The Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians has launched its new public website: www.ost.doi.gov. The website has been redesigned and includes many new helpful services and resources.

ON OUR WEBSITE, INDIVIDUAL INDIAN TRUST BENEFICIARIES CAN:

- ◆ LOCATE YOUR LOCAL FIDUCIARY TRUST OFFICER
- ◆ RECEIVE AN EXPLANATION OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN QUARTERLY TRUST ACCOUNT STATEMENTS
- ◆ DOWNLOAD FORMS TO SIGN UP FOR DIRECT DEPOSIT
- ◆ SEARCH FOR YOUR NAME ON THE WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN LIST
- ◆ DOWNLOAD CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND IRS TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION FORMS
- ◆ OBTAIN BENEFICIARY CALL CENTER NUMBER AND HOURS (1-888-678-6836)

IN ADDITION TO THESE FEATURES, TRIBAL BENEFICIARIES CAN:

- ◆ FIND INFORMATION ON MANAGING TRUST PROGRAMS
- ◆ ACCESS COPIES OF TRIBAL LEADER LETTERS
- ◆ OBTAIN INFORMATION ON HOW TO WITHDRAW FUNDS FROM THE TRUST FOR SELF MANAGEMENT

The OST website also has current information on OST, trust reform projects, congressional activities and answers to frequently asked questions.

www.ost.doi.gov