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News Release

Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians

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President Requests \$139.7 Million for Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians in FY2014

Washington, D.C. — The President’s fiscal year (FY) 2014 budget request for the Department of the Interior’s Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) is \$139.7 million. The request, a decrease of \$12.4 million from the enacted 2012 fiscal year level, reflects the need for strong fiscal controls, and ensures that OST will be able to fully carry out its responsibilities to Indian trust beneficiaries in FY 2014.

“This budget will enable us to provide improved services to Indian trust beneficiaries,” said Principal Deputy Special Trustee Michele F. Singer. “OST will build on the efficiencies and improvements that were implemented in FY2013 to expand transparency and accountability to our trust clients.”

Key program funding levels include \$9.9 million for Trust Records, \$4.9 million for Trust Review and Audit, \$24.7 million for Field Operations, \$10.7 million for Appraisal Services, \$28.9 million for Trust Services, \$23.0 million for Historical Trust Accounting and \$34.7 million for Business Management including \$12.7 million to fund trust related activities in the Office of Hearings and Appeals and the Indian Trust Litigation Office.

OST carries out the Department’s Indian fiduciary trust responsibilities by providing accurate and responsive beneficiary services to encourage increased tribal participation in managing trust assets under tribal self-governance and self-determination. OST’s goal is to provide accurate, timely, and reliable ownership information, ensure trust fund asset management meets fiduciary standards, and manage trust land and natural resources effectively.

OST’s operational responsibility for financial trust fund management includes the receipt, investment and disbursement of Indian trust funds and real estate appraisals on Indian trust lands. OST manages nearly \$4.4 billion held in over 3,000 trust accounts for more than 250 Indian tribes and over 387,000 open Individual Indian Money accounts.

The Individual Indian Money Account Litigation Settlement, formerly referred to as the *Cobell v. Salazar* lawsuit, was approved with finality by the U.S. Supreme Court in November 2012. The settlement provides \$1.9 billion for a Trust Land Consolidation Fund and authorizes the Department to acquire fractional interests in trust or restricted land, from willing individual Indian sellers, for the benefit of tribal communities. The Secretary of the Interior established the Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations within the Office of the Secretary to implement the purpose of the Fund. OST is responsible for completing all land appraisals, printing and mailing of offers, and processing all payments resulting from the Land Buy-Back Program. OST also responds to telephone inquiries about the Buy-Back Program through the Trust Beneficiary Call Center and in-person inquiries in the field.

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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.