WASHINGTON, D.C. — The President’s fiscal year 2011 budget request for Department of the Interior’s Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) is $160.2 million, which reflects a decrease of $25.8 million below the enacted fiscal year 2010 budget.

“The proposed Cobell settlement, completion of certain projects and more efficient operations have contributed to decreases in OST’s budget request,” said Principal Deputy Special Trustee Donna Erwin. OST carries out the Secretary’s fiduciary responsibilities for American Indian and Alaska Native communities by providing accurate and responsive trust services to individual Indians and tribal trust beneficiaries.

Due to the proposed settlement of the long-standing Cobell litigation concerning Indian trust management, the budget includes a decrease of $25 million for Individual Indian Money accounting work performed by the Office of Historical Trust Accounting (OHTA). OHTA will still perform tribal accounting for 95 pending tribal cases, which involve 116 tribes, and work on pre-calendar year 2003 special deposit accounts.

Other decreases in the budget request include:
- $1.5 million as a result of in-sourcing records indexing and completion of the historical record indexing project.
- $1 million as a result of the Data Quality and Integrity post-conversion clean up, which is nearing completion.
- $60,000 from implementing and automating a one-time disbursement process.
- $50,000 from cost savings by providing disbursements to trust beneficiaries via the debit card program.

In addition, President Obama established the SAVE Award program to challenge federal employees to submit ideas that will yield savings and improve government operations. OST anticipates it will realize savings from implementing SAVE award proposals in three areas:
- $190,000 from consolidation of systems, including email, servers, data centers and help desks within the Department;
- $107,000 through the expansion of strategic sourcing of acquisitions, beyond its current use for software and hardware acquisitions;
- $35,000 reduced travel expenditures due to expanded implementation of technologies such as videoconferencing, teleconferencing, shared websites and other technologies that
enable real-time communications and shared access to documents.

A few increases are included in the overall budget request, including $800,000 for the probate workload.

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. OHTA was realigned in 2007 to report directly to the Special Trustee. Visit the OST website at www.doi.gov/ost to view the fiscal year 2011 budget request.

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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.