NEWS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL TRUSTEE FOR AMERICAN INDIANS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 21, 2004

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OST TO CONTRACT WITH NATIONAL BUSINESS CENTER TO MANAGE ITS APPRAISAL PROGRAM

Washington, D.C. - Special Trustee Ross O. Swimmer announced that the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) will enter into an agreement with the Department's National Business Center (NBC) Appraisal Group for the management of Indian land appraisals performed by the OST Office of Appraisal Services (OST/OAS). This important move will strengthen the OST appraisal program.

Under the agreement, tribes will still have the ability to contract and compact with OST for the appraisal function. Indian Preference in hiring for appraiser positions will continue under the agreement. The agreement would accommodate concerns raised during tribal consultations held last fall on OST's participation in the Department appraisal consolidation and from comments submitted to OST.

Special Trustee Swimmer stated "I am pleased that this agreement will improve the management of the appraisal function and will address the concerns voiced by tribal leaders and maintain opportunities for tribes to contract and compact the Indian land appraisal function. Allowing OAS to contract for management services from NBC should enhance the integrity of the appraisals performed on Indian lands."

In June, 2003, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton announced that real estate appraisal functions performed by various agencies within the Department would be consolidated into a single office. OST held four tribal consultation sessions during September and October, 2003, to discuss specific issues unique to the appraisal of Indian trust assets as conducted by OAS, and by self-governance and self-determination tribes. Public comments were solicited following the consultation meetings. The Department appraisal consolidation became effective this fall. The OST agreement with NBC is expected to be fully implemented by the conclusion of FY 2004.

OAS was created after the land appraisal program was transferred from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to OST in June 2002. OST is responsible for the oversight and coordination of the Department's efforts to reform its practices relating to the management and discharge of the Secretary's Indian trust responsibilities.

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