

Office of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs

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Ragsdale Announces Vicki Forrest as New Head of BIA Trust Services

WASHINGTON – Bureau of Indian Affairs Director W. Patrick Ragsdale today announced that he has appointed Vicki L. Forrest as the new deputy director for the BIA's Office of Trust Services. Forrest, an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, came to the BIA from the Interior Department's Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST).

"I am pleased Vicki Forrest has joined the BIA's management team as the Deputy Director for Trust Services," Ragdale said. "She is an able Federal Indian trust administrator who will bring strong oversight and accountability experience to her new position."

Forrest has a background in accounting and Indian trust management for both her tribe and OST. Prior to her current appointment, she had served since March of 2004 as the Regional Fiduciary Trust Administrator for OST's Eastern Oklahoma and Pacific regions. As such, she oversaw the regions' Fiduciary Trust Officers by providing administrative and programmatic guidance relating to Indian assets and monitoring the management of such assets to ensure their appropriate protection, accounting and disbursement.

"Working for the betterment of 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."

From October 2002 to March 2004, Forrest served as a Trust Reform Specialist within OST's offices in Albuquerque, N.M., where she provided technical assistance in support of a variety of Indian trust management improvement projects. She also applied her financial and accounting expertise to the successful resolution of problems related to implementing trust reforms and coordinated the accrual of resources and other support to accomplish the projects' goals.

In April 2002, Forrest joined OST as an accountant where she developed accounting policies and procedures for OST financial systems, ensured that such policies and procedures were in compliance with governmental policies, standards, applicable laws, regulations and precedent decisions, and served as a team member for reviewing, evaluating and developing new procedures for OST's Trust Funds Accounting System (TFAS).

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Forrest served as Controller for the Cherokee Nation from April 2000 to December 2001 where she led the tribe' Financial Resources Group with its 60-person staff and responsibility for a \$250 million budget. Her responsibilities included overseeing the management and finance function of the Cherokee Nation, including the proper accounting of tribal funds in accordance with generally accepted or legally required accounting principles and methods, assuring the integrity of the tribe's financial information, and protecting its assets.

Forrest began her Federal career in 1990 with the Indian Health Service (IHS) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Claremore, Okla. From January 1990 to April 1995, she served her Service Unit as a Operating Accountant.

Forrest graduated from Oaks (Okla.) High School in 1984. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from Northeastern State University in 1990, where she also made the President's Honor Roll, and has completed several hours of graduate work towards a Masters of Business Administration at the University of Tulsa. She is licensed by the State of New Mexico Public Accountancy Board as a Certified Public Accountant.

The BIA Deputy Director, Trust Services, who reports to the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, is responsible for all headquarters activities associated with the management and protection of Federal Indian trust and restricted lands, real estate services and natural resources, including dam safety, irrigation and power systems, forestry and wildland fire management, land, title and records, and the probating of Indian trust estates.