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Finally, while the OST would retain its oversight responsibilities of fiduciary trust asset management and other authorities, the Plan creates a new Deputy Special Trustee for Trust Accountability to be responsible for trust training, regulatory policy and procedures and a Trust Program Management Center. The Center would be centrally located within Indian Country with a staff of up to six trust administrators overseeing trust officers and trust account managers in the field.

The Indian Trust Management Plan is the culmination of the Department's extensive meetings with tribal leaders following Secretary Norton's release in November 2001 of a proposal to improve the Department's management of Indian trust assets by consolidating all of the BIA's trust functions into another entity, the Bureau of Indian Trust Asset Management (BITAM), under a new Assistant Secretary for Indian Trust Asset Management.

After hearing from tribal leaders about the proposal, Secretary Norton held several consultation meetings with them to discuss her ideas as well as those put forth by tribes to improve the Department's trust management efforts. She also agreed to establish the Joint Tribal/DOI Task Force on Trust Reform to review all of the proposals and develop recommendations for the Department.

For nearly 12 months, the Joint Tribal/DOI Task Force on Trust Reform has commanded the attention of Indian Country and the unprecedented, full-time involvement of the most senior officials of the Department. The meetings generated more than 5,500 page of testimony and over 1,500 senior staff hours were dedicated to the effort.

"We could not have come this far without the input of tribal leaders," McCaleb said. "I want to extend my personal appreciation to the members of the Joint Tribal/DOI Task Force on Trust Reform for their dedication and commitment to this major undertaking."

The Joint Tribal/DOI Task Force on Trust Reform will be reconvening in Washington, D.C., on December 16, 2002.

The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Department's trust responsibility to American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and individuals, as well as promoting tribal self-determination and economic development. The Assistant Secretary oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is responsible for providing services to approximately 1.4 million American Indians and Alaska Natives from the nation's 562 Federally recognized tribes.

**Note to Editors:** *The 2 charts that accompany this press release may also be viewed via the Department's website at [www.doi.gov](http://www.doi.gov).*

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