



# NEWS

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## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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### **SECRETARY BABBITT STRENGTHENS INDIAN RESOURCE PROTECTION**

In a newly released report, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt charged each Interior Department office and bureau with identifying policies and procedures that protect and conserve Indian resources. The report, entitled *Protection of Indian Trust Resources Procedures*, outlines how each Interior Department bureau and office will integrate trust protection practices and policies into daily activities.

"We are strongly committed to ensuring that each bureau and office understands its trust obligations and conducts all activities that affect American Indian tribes and tribal members in accordance with the highest fiduciary standard," Babbitt said. "We are equally committed to working with tribes on a government-to-government basis in recognition of the sovereign powers of tribal governments. We are, therefore, pleased to have completed a major step in advancing Department-wide adherence to principles and practices that not only make the Department an effective trustee, but a responsive one as well."

"This report," said Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Ada E. Deer, "demonstrates our commitment to greater intergovernmental communication and cooperation with tribes. This report also can serve as a model for all Federal agencies to follow. I support and continue to encourage all Interior Department bureaus to work on initiatives that will benefit tribes and Indian people."

This Interior Department initiative also furthers President Clinton's 1994 memorandum on *Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments*, which was issued to "ensure that the rights of sovereign tribal governments are fully respected." In this directive, President Clinton highlighted the U.S. Government's unique legal relationship with tribal governments and outlined principles for all federal agencies to follow. The Interior Department's Bureau of Reclamation, for example, has completed an "Indian Trust Asset Policy and National Environmental Policy Act Procedures" report. Its question-and-answer

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format provides guidance to bureau personnel on protecting Indian trust resources.

The report, *Protection of Indian Trust Resources Procedures*, was completed by the Office of American Indian Trust. Copies of the report can be obtained by contacting the Office of American Indian Trust, 1849 C Street N.W., MS-2472, Washington, D.C. 20240, telephone (202) 208-3338.

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