Interior also to hold an additional tribal consultation session at NCAI annual convention

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WASHINGTON, DC – Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Kevin K. Washburn today announced that the Department of the Interior has extended to Nov. 3, 2014, the public comment period on proposed regulations to reform the process by which rights-of-way on Indian lands are approved and managed. He also announced the Department will hold an additional tribal consultation session on the proposed regulations during the week of Oct. 26, 2014, during the National Congress of American Indians 2014 Annual Convention in Atlanta, Ga. The draft rule proposes to update Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) regulations at 25 CFR 169 that govern rights-of-way across Indian land which were promulgated more than 40 years ago and last updated more than 30 years ago. The regulations have been deemed ill-suited for the modern requirements for rights-of-way leasing, including the need for faster timelines for BIA approval. The Department is proposing to streamline the process for obtaining BIA approval and ensure seamless consistency with recently promulgated BIA leasing regulations. It also seeks to make the process more efficient and transparent, increase flexibility in compensation and valuations, and support landowner decisions on land use. The proposed rule was published on June 17, 2014, with an initial deadline for public comments of August 18. On August 13, the Department extended the comment deadline to October 2, 2014. To further obtain views and suggestions on the proposed changes from tribal leaders and the general public, the Department also held three tribal consultation sessions and one public hearing by teleconference. For additional information on the proposed rule and the upcoming consultation session, visit http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/ORM/RightsofWay/index.htm.

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