Offers Will Be Valid for 45 Days as Part of $1.9 Billion Land Buy-Back Program

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WASHINGTON, DC – Deputy Secretary of the Interior Mike Connor today announced that purchase offers have been sent to nearly 1,800 landowners with fractional interests on the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Oregon as part of the Department of the Interior's commitment to reduce fractionation and strengthen tribal sovereignty through its Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations (Buy-Back Program).

Thus far, the Buy-Back Program has successfully concluded transactions worth more than $115 million and has restored the equivalent of almost 270,000 acres of land to tribal governments.

"We continue to fulfill President Obama's pledge to help strengthen Native American communities with the ongoing momentum and steady implementation of the Buy-Back Program," said Deputy Secretary Connor. "We must work together to ensure individuals are aware of this historic opportunity to support the consolidation of tribal lands for the benefit of each tribal community."

Umatilla landowners will have until October 31, 2014, to return accepted offers.

The Buy-Back Program implements the land consolidation component of the Cobell Settlement, which provided $1.9 billion to purchase fractional interests in trust or restricted land from willing sellers at fair market value within a 10-year period. Individuals who choose to sell their interests receive payments directly into their Individual Indian Money (IIM) accounts. Consolidated interests are immediately restored to tribal trust ownership for uses benefiting the reservation community and tribal members.

There are almost 245,000 owners of nearly three million fractional interests, spanning 150 Indian reservations, who are eligible to participate in the Buy-Back Program. Many see little or no economic benefit from what are often very small undivided interests in lands that cannot be utilized due to their highly fractionated state.

In addition to receiving fair market value for their land based on objective appraisals, sellers also receive a base payment of $75 per offer, regardless of the value of the land.

Offers are also pending for landowners with fractional interests at the following locations:

- **Gila River Indian Reservation: October 10, 2014 ·**
- **Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation: October 17, 2014 ·**
- **Flathead Indian Reservation: October 24, 2014**

Sales of land interests will also result in up to $60 million in contributions to the Cobell Education

Scholarship Fund. This contribution by Interior is in addition to the amounts paid to individual sellers, so it will not reduce the amount landowners receive for their interests.

Landowners can contact the Trust Beneficiary Call Center at 888-678-6836 with questions about their purchase offers. Individuals can also visit their local Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) or Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) office, or find more information at www.doi.gov/buybackprogram/landowners in order to make informed decisions about their land.

Individual participation is voluntary. A decision to sell land for restoration to tribes does not impact a landowner's eligibility to receive individual settlement payments from the Cobell Settlement, which are being handled by the Garden City Group. Inquiries regarding Settlement payments should be directed to (800) 961-6109.
