New Offers will be sent to Landowners with Interests on the Flathead,Umatilla, Coeur d'Alene, Lake Traverse and Crow Indian Reservations

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WASHINGTON, DC – Following Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell's recent visit with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, Deputy Secretary of the Interior Mike Connor today announced that more than $8.3 million in purchase offers have been mailed to nearly 2,100 individual landowners with fractional interests on that reservation. This mailing will kick off several weeks of additional purchase offers to landowners who own fractional land interests on the Umatilla, Coeur d'Alene, Lake Traverse (homeland of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate) and Crow Indian Reservations.

As part of President Obama's commitment to help restore tribal homelands, the Department's Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations (Buy-Back Program) has successfully concluded transactions worth almost $103 million, restoring the equivalent of nearly 265,000 acres of land to tribal governments.

"The success of the Buy-Back Program is reflected in our ongoing collaborations with tribal governments and active outreach to individual owners," said Deputy Secretary Connor. "We know that tribal leaders can best explain the value of reducing fractionated lands and the significant benefit to Indian Country, and we are committed to making sure that individuals are aware of this historic opportunity to strengthen tribal sovereignty by supporting the consolidation of Indian lands."

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.

Flathead Reservation landowners will have until October 24, 2014 to return accepted offers.

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

Scholarship Fund. This contribution 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
