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

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WASHINGTON – The Department of the Interior today announced that purchase offers have been sent to more than 4,000 individual landowners with fractional interests at the Gila River Indian Reservation in Arizona and the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Montana. These offers, totaling nearly $100 million, will give eligible landowners with interests in tribal priority tracts the opportunity to voluntarily sell their land to be held in trust for each tribe.

With these offers, Interior's Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations (Buy-Back Program) has sent more than 37,000 purchase offers to owners of fractionated interests. The Program has successfully concluded transactions worth nearly $97 million and has restored the equivalent of almost 265,000 acres of land to tribal governments.

"I continue to be encouraged by the progress we see with the Buy-Back Program, and welcome the ongoing collaboration we have had with many Tribal Nations as we implement this Program across Indian Country," said Deputy Secretary Michael Connor. "The success of the Buy-Back Program is vitally important. We are working vigorously with tribal staff to make 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 will receive payments directly into their 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 3 million fractional interests, spanning 150 Indian reservations, who are eligible to participate in the 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.

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.

**Gila River landowners will have until October 10, 2014, to return accepted offers.**

**Northern Cheyenne landowners will have until October 17, 2014, to return accepted offers.**

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.

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