Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Special Trustee Ross O. Swimmer today announced four tribal consultation sessions that will be held to discuss issues relating to the participation of the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) in the Department of the Interior consolidation of all real estate appraisal functions. The consultations will be held on September 24,2003, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and on October 28,2003, in Las Vegas, Nevada. Formal notice of the consultations will be published in the Federal Register later this week.

"These tribal consultations will be critical to resolving issues associated with OST's participation in this consolidation that are unique to real estate appraisals performed on Indian trust lands," stated Swimmer.

On June 19, 2003, Secretary Norton announced that real estate appraisal functions currently performed by various agencies within the Department would be consolidated into a single office. This action is taken in response to concerns about the objectivity and management of the appraisal programs within the Department, and documented in reports issued by the Department's Inspector General, the General Accounting Office and other groups.

Discussions with the Department and OST's participation on the Department's Appraisal Reform Team indicate that it would be beneficial for the OST appraisal program to join this consolidation. However, issues specific to the appraisal of Indian trust assets require special consideration.

"I am looking forward to a productive discussion with tribal leaders on the potential benefits to the Indian trust asset appraisal program that can result from this consolidation, including additional resources to address the appraisal backlog in Indian country, and an increased level of beneficiary confidence in asset valuations," Swimmer remarked. "Some important issues, including the future process for contracting and compacting the appraisal function, need to be discussed with the tribes. These meetings are the perfect opportunity for a thorough discussion of these issues."

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| WHAT | Tribal consultation meetings on the Department's consolidation of office appraisal functions. |
| WHEN | September 24,2003, from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., in Tulsa Oklahoma September 24, 2003, from 1 :30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., in Tulsa, Oklahoma October 28, 2003, from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., in Las Vegas, Nevada October 28,2003, and from 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., in Las Vegas, Nevada. |
| WHERE | Tulsa, Oklahoma: Hilton Garden Inn - Tulsa Airport 7728 East Virgin Court, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74115, telephone (918) 838-1444. ,) , Las Vegas, Nevada: MGM Hotel 3799 Las Vegas Blvd, Las Vegas, Nevada 89109, telephone (702) 891-1111. |

The OST Office of Appraisal Services was created after the appraisal program was transferred from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to OST in June 2002. The Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians is responsible for the oversight and coordination of the Department's efforts to reform its practices relating to the management and discharge of the Secretary's Indian trust responsibilities.

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