A copy of the plans can be found at www.doi.gov/news/bv.html

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
For Immediate Release: January 7, 2003
Print PDF

WASHINGTON - The Department of the Interior has submitted plans to a federal court outlining a proposed $335 million effort to conduct an historical accounting of individual American Indian and Alaska Native trust accounts as well as a separate blueprint to guide the future management of Interior's trust obligations to American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Deputy Interior Secretary J. Steven Griles says the filing late last night confirms the Department's firm commitment to reengineer its trust asset management functions and reasserts Interior's ability to perform an historical accounting for some 260,000 Individual Indian Money (IIM) trust account holders.

"Interior is ready, willing and able to provide an historical accounting to account holders," Deputy Secretary Griles said today. "We intend to provide IIM account holders with historical statements of their accounts and detailed information regarding their land assets. A 1994 federal statute specifies the scope of this monumental task. Secretary Norton and this administration are committed to seek the necessary funding from Congress to perform this important work."

The Historical Accounting Plan is expected to take five years and is designed to provide each IIM account holder with a Historical Statement of Account. Most of the money in IIM trust fund accounts will be reconciled through a transaction-by-transaction basis, while other accounts will be reviewed through accepted accounting methods that include statistical analysis.

Four of the nation's five largest accounting firms are consulting with Interior's Office of Historical Trust Accounting (OHTA), including Deloitte & Touche LLP, Ernst & Young LLP, Grant Thornton LLP and KPMG LLP. A fifth firm - Chavarria, Dunne & Lamey LLC has experience with numerous Indian trust projects over preceding years. OHTA is also being advised by Bank of America, which has the largest commercial trust operation in the United States. Nationally recognized historical research and statistical consulting firms have also been retained for this project.

"While we have been working aggressively to create a plan to review the history of Indian trust accounts, Interior is also looking forward - carrying out a comprehensive and systematic plan to reform how it will manage its trust responsibilities into the future," Deputy Secretary Griles said today. "We are following through with our commitment to completely examine and document Interior's current trust business processes across Indian country so we are able to confidently reengineer those functions to ensure we will meet our goals and objectives in trust asset management. "

Griles says Interior's trust management reform efforts have been part of an open process that has benefited from tribal leaders' input and that tracks previous reports filed with the federal court:

"We have described and identified our trust management reform efforts in quarterly reports to the court, beginning with the Eighth Report filed in January of 2002," he said. "Interior's reorganization and

reform efforts have been conducted in the full view of tribes through an exhaustive consultation and review process over the past year. The reengineering and reorganization efforts that are now underway at the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Office of the Special Trustee would not have been possible without the advice and counsel of tribal leaders."
