Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan and Barron Collier today signed agreements on the terms and conditions for closing on the Phoenix Indian School land exchange by December 18, 1996. "This exchange will provide substantial benefits for Indian tribes, the City of Phoenix, and our national parks and refuge systems, Lujan said. “These agreements represent long and arduous negotiations and a great deal of work by Congress, the city of Phoenix, the Interior Department and officials of the Arron Collier Company. I am convinced this is the best possible agreement and that it protects the interests of all parties." In exchange for approximately 68 acres of the former Phoenix Indian School site in Phoenix, Arizona, the Federal Government will acquire from Collier about 108,000 acres of Florida wetlands important to the protection of the Everglades and fish and wildlife resources in that area.

The agreement also obligates Collier to pay $34.9 million at the end of 30 years and to make 30 consecutive annual interest .payments of almost $3 million into Indian education funds established by the agreement starting one year after the closing date. The obligations for payment of the monies earmarked for Indian education are secured by liens on Collier's interest in 15 acres of the Indian School property and on about 7 1/2 acres of downtown Phoenix land that Collier will receive as a result of and exchange with the city of Phoenix. Because, of the delayed closing of the land exchange until December 1996, funds for Indian education may not be available until 1997. The Secretary expressed regret over this delay, but concluded that a delayed closing was better than no exchange at all.

The exchange largest in terms of dollar value in the history of the Department of the Interior, was initiated to provide for the acquisition of environmentally sensitive wetlands in Florida, and to secure supplemental funding for Indian education, Of the 108,000 acres in Florida, more than 83,000 than 20,000 acres to Ten Thousand Island National Wildlife Refuge, and more than 4,000 acres to Florida panther National wildlife Refuge.

The Phoenix Indian School was closed in 1990. Legislation enacted in 1998 to govern disposal of the federal property, allocates 11.5 acres to the veterans Administration, 4.5 acres to the State Veterans administration, and 20 acres to the city of Phoenix. The remaining acreage is to exchange for the Florida lands held by Collier. Under an agreement with the city of Phoenix, Collier is to retain 15 acres of the Indian School property it is obtain under the legislation and the company will exchange the remainder for property in the downtown area. The City of Phoenix plans a park on the land it would acquire in the exchange.