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For Immediate Release: August 27, 1992
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Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan today announced the establishment of a special Indian Minerals Service Office devoted exclusively to serving Native Americans in the Four corners area of New Mexico, Utah, Colorado and Arizona.

The new office, located in Farmington, New Mexico, will be operated cooperatively by three Interior Department agencies: the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Minerals Management Service (MMS), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

"In creating this new service-oriented office, the BIA, MMS and BLM are establishing a quality, 'one-stop' service center for Indian tribal and allottee mineral owners who are concerned with the leasing, operation and revenues associated with minerals development on their lands," said Lujan. "This is in keeping with the Bush administration commitment to work closely with the tribes and individuals and to improve services to American Indians. For the first time, we combine - in a single facility - the expertise and services of three Interior agencies, each with important responsibilities for Indian mineral activities."

The Farmington Indian Minerals Service Office will serve several thousand allottees and a number of tribal governments in the area. Indian allottees are Indians who may lease their land individually, for such purposes as development of mineral assets. Among the tribal governments served by the Farmington office are the Navajo, Northern Ute, southern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute and Jicarilla Apache.

"We believe that the combined talents and knowledge of each bureau contributing to staffing the Indian Minerals Office will result in service and efficiency that surpasses what the BIA, BLM and MMS could provide independently," said Scott Sewell, director of MMS, the lead agency for the office. "As a result of this partnership of bureaus, our Indian constituents will receive more timely and convenient service," said Sewell.