Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan announced today that an agreement in principal has been reached with Barron Collier Company on the terms and conditions for closing on the Phoenix Indian School land exchange. In exchange for approximately 88 acres of the former Phoenix Indian School site in Phoenix, Arizona, the Federal Government acquire about 108,000 acres of Florida wetlands important to protection of the Everglades and fish and wildlife resources in that area. Collier also will be required to make a $34.9 million payment for an Indian education trust fund The Interior Department and Collier have agreed to complete and sign documents by October 9, 1992, which will require the company to close on the land exchange in four years or less.

Provisions in the agreement call for a promissory note under which Collier agrees to pay $34.9 million at the end of 30 years and to make 30 consecutive annual interest payments of almost $3 million per year into the Indian education fund starting one year after the date of the closing of the exchange. The obligations for payment will be 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 Colliers will receive as a result of a land exchange with the City of Phoenix. Execution of a trust fund payment agreement and closing is contingent on a determination by the Secretary that appraisals support values on these properties to sufficiently collateralize Collier's financial obligations, and extension by the City of Phoenix of its agreement to exchange lands with Collier.

The exchange, largest 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 funding for Indian education. Of the 108,000 acres in Florida, more than 83,000 acres would be added to the Big cypress National Preserve; more 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 1988 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 be exchanged for the Florida lands held by Collier. Under an agreement with the City of Phoenix, Collier proposed retaining 15 acres of the Indian School property it is to obtain under the legislation and exchanging the remainder for property in the downtown area. The City of Phoenix plans a 73-acre park on the land it would acquire in the exchange.