Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ross Swimmer said today he supports the repair of existing Navajo homes on Hopi Partitioned Lands (HPL) in northern Arizona, but pledged legal recourse if evidence is found new home construction is underway in the area.

"We have always maintained that existing law and court orders allow for repair and it has never been our position that such repairs are prohibited," Swimmer said. "But if new home construction is started on the HPL, we will have no choice but to seek appropriate legal action to stop the Navajo Tribe from breaking federal law.

Swimmer's comments came in response to published reports that Navajo Tribal Chairman Peter MacDonald and other Navajo tribal officials were repairing Navajo homes in the Teesto area of the HPL last weekend. "I applaud the action of Chairman MacDonald in his efforts to help his people on the HPL," Swimmer said.

Swimmer said it would continue to be the policy of the federal government to encourage the remaining Navajo families on the HPL to move into new residences on lands in northeastern Arizona provided to the Navajo Tribe for resettlement purposes.

"There remains as much urgency as ever to get the remaining Navajo families signed up and moved to the new lands," Swimmer said. "We look forward to Chairman MacDonald's cooperation with us in getting the remaining families resettled.

"We are sensitive to the problems of Navajos remaining on Hopi lands," he added, "but we must guarantee that laws established by Congress be upheld."