Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Bureau of Indian Affairs' 1981 budget request has been reduced by ~40.2 million as a part of the President's anti-inflation program. The President's revised budget proposals, sent to Congress March 31, cut some $15 billion from the total U.S. budget he proposed to Congress on January 28. The proposed cuts for the Bureau call for the closing of two off-reservation boarding schools, Stewart Indian School in Nevada and Fort Sill Indian School at Lawton, Oklahoma. The largest reductions, however, will be brought about by delaying irrigation project funding ($22.3 million) and road construction ($10.8 million).

The new budget proposal would reduce funding for the operation of Indian programs by $7.1 million. This includes $1 million from the closing of the two schools; $4.1 million in personnel compensation; $1.7 million for supplies and equipment, and $300,000 from a program to recruit Indians into various starting-level professional positions in the Bureau. If the Stewart and Fort Sill schools are closed, the students can be accommodated in other Bureau schools, the Office of Indian Education Programs has indicated. A large proportion of the students now enrolled at the two schools are from out-of-state. Stewart has a current enrollment of 409 and Fort Sill has 160. Irrigation projects eliminated from the 1981 request are: Colorado River Reservation, $780,000; White Mountain Apache, $5 million; Rocky Boy's, $375,000; Omaha Reservation, $525,000; Standing Rock, $2 million; Cheyenne River, $500,000; Lower Brule, $5.2 million; and Yakima, $400,000. In addition funding requested for the project at Fallon, Nevada, was reduced from $3 million to $2 million and the Navajo Irrigation Project from $18 million to $11.48 million. The proposed reduction in road construction from $59.4 million to $48.6 million would require an 18 percent reduction Bureau-wide. These budget reductions are in the funding requested; the actual funding provided will be determined by legislation to be passed by the Congress and signed by the President. The 1981 fiscal year begins October 1, 1980.