



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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(Following is a statement delivered by Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton during a visit to the Uintah-Ouray Indian preservation in Utah Tuesday evening, October 5, 1971.)

I am very pleased to report to you that before I left Washington, a Secretarial Order was signed that revokes a 1930 oil shale withdrawal order as it pertained to your Indian lands.

Thus, we have erased any doubt that might have existed as to the Tribe's ownership of lands and minerals affected by the 1930 order.

I have instructed the Bureau of Land Management to note this action on their land records. In a few days, the new Secretarial Order will also appear in the Federal Register for public notice.

The problem cleared up by the new Order was complex. Let me explain it. In 1930 an Executive Order was issued that withdrew from disposal all the deposits of oil shale and the lands containing those deposits that are owned by the United States within the State of Utah and several other States.

Then, in 1945, the Secretary of the Interior restored to the Uintah and Ouray Tribe the undisposed of opened lands on the reservations, including some lands withdrawn by the 1930 order.

However, in the 1960's the Geological Survey issued an oil shale classification order that appeared to have a possible effect upon certain of the Indian lands restored to Indian ownership in 1945. The validity of the 1945 order, with respect to lands classified as oil shale lands, was in doubt. These included grazing reserve lands; timber reserve lands; over 200, 000 acres of land and minerals restored to the Tribe in 1945; mineral rights for another 200, 000 acres; and certain individual allotments.

Now the doubts are removed by my new order. There is no longer any question that these lands and minerals in question are in Tribal ownership.
