Media Contact: Bureau of Indian Affairs
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Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton today announced the adoption of changes in the Federal regulations that will make it possible to grant certain rights-of-way permits for oil and gas pipelines across Indian lands for terms up to a maximum of 50 years.

Under the former regulations the maximum term was 20 years with a 20-year renewal. Consent of the Indian landowners was required in connection with both the original term and the renewal. Existing permits are not affected by the new regulations.

Secretary Seaton emphasized that the new rules will not automatically grant 50-year permits. New applications will be required in each case, and they will be decided on their merits, he said. The Secretary also stressed that every application for a 50-year right-of-way across Indian lands will have to be accompanied by a new statement of proof of consent of the Indian landowners, the 50-year period will not be considered a minimum, but a maximum, he said. All existing safeguards for the Indians' welfare will remain in force, he said.

The changes also simplify the procedure involved in filing applications for rights-of-way across Indian lands and reduce the number of maps that must accompany an application. A notice of intention to adopt the new rules was published in the Federal Register. Most of the contents received from interested parties were in favor of the changes that have been adopted.