Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Legislation to add some 370,000 acres of land to Indian tribal holdings was described by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson as "a needed step toward better management and use of the land."

Public Law 94-114, signed by President Ford October 17, transfers certain tracts of "submarginal" land purchased by the United States in the 1930's for tribal uses.

The 17 Indian tribes involved have had the use of the land but have been limited in its development and use because of the lack of clear title.

The land now is to be held in trust by the United States for the affected Indian tribes and will be managed in the same way as other reservation or Indian trust land.

The purchase of these lands by the United States was part of a national program to retire from private cultivation land which was low in productivity or otherwise ill-suited for farming operations. A total of approximately 11 million acres was acquired under the program. Most of it is now under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management or various states or municipalities.

Under the Act the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation, Montana received more than 85,000 acres and the Navajo Tribe acquired almost 70,000 acres in New Mexico.

Additions to other reservations were as follows: Bad River, Wisconsin, 13,149 acres; Blackfeet, Montana, 9,037; Cheyenne River, South Dakota, 3,739; Crow Creek, South Dakota, 19,170; Lower Brule, South Dakota, 13,210; Fort Totten, North Dakota, 1,425;Fort Belknap, Montana, 25,531; Lac Courte Oreilles, Wisconsin, 13,185; L'Anse, Michigan, 4,017; White Earth, Minnesota, 28,545; Pine Ridge, South Dakota, 18,065; Rosebud, South Dakota, 28,735; Fort Hall, Idaho, 8,712 and Standing Rock, North Dakota, 10,256. The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, which does not have a reservation in the technical sense, also received 18,750 acres.

Under a separate Act, also signed by the President October 17, the Laguna Pueblo Tribe of New Mexico received approximately 520 acres of land within the present reservation boundaries. Most of this land had been under the administration of the Bureau of Land Management.