Bureau of Indian Affairs Transfers Approximately 9,300 Acres into Trust Status for the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Tara Mac Lean Sweeney announced today the decision for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to take approximately 9,300 acres of land near Mandaree, North Dakota into trust status for the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, a tribe also widely known as the Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara (MHA) Nation. In 2011, the Tribe submitted its Fee-To-Trust Application for the Figure 4 Ranch Property, which is currently used by the Tribe for a buffalo ranch operation as well as oil and gas production. The approval of the Tribe's application will return a portion of lands originally included within the reservation boundaries under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 to the Tribe.

"It is a great honor to approve the transfer of these lands into trust status and to support the Tribe's efforts to diversify its economy," **said Assistant Secretary Sweeney.** "The Mandan, Hidatsa & Arikara Nation has waited over seven years for a decision and I am proud that, with Secretary Bernhardt's leadership, our office was able to overcome the barriers and red tape stalling this important application."

"The MHA Nation is very grateful to Secretary Bernhardt, Assistant Secretary Sweeney, and the Department of Interior staff, especially Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary John Tahsuda, for their successful completion of our land into trust application," **said Mark Fox, Chairman of the MHA Nation.** "This significant step will positively enhance resource management and economic development for our tribal Nation. We appreciate the federal government's efforts and commitment in this important matter!"

The Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation passed Tribal Resolution Number 112-VJB, dated October 20, 2011, an application to acquire in trust approximately 9,303.79 acres known as the "Figure Four Ranch" for tribal self-determination and economic development. The acquisition will be subject to all valid existing leases, rights-of-way, easements, permits and reservations in patents or deeds through which grantor acquired title.

According to the BIA Trust Asset Accounting Management System (TAAMS), the Three Affiliated Tribes has a land base comprised of 118,696 tribal acres and 330,315 allotted acres, totaling 449,011 acres, held in trust by the BIA for the Tribe and/or its members. According to the Tribe's Enrollment Office, as of February 16, 2018, the tribal population consists of approximately 15,898 members.

The Secretary of the Interior is authorized by Section 5 of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), 25 U.S.C. § 5108 to acquire land into trust for federally-recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. Lands held in trust cannot be sold, alienated or transferred to non-Indians or non-Natives. The

Department of the Interior's regulations at 25 C.F.R. Part 151 set forth the procedures for implementing Section 5 of the IRA.

*The **Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs** advises the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs policy issues, communicates policy to and oversee the programs of the BIA and the BIE, provides leadership in consultations with tribes, and serves as the DOI official for intra- and inter- departmental coordination and liaison within the Executive Branch on Indian matters.*

*The **Bureau of Indian Affairs**' mission includes developing and protecting Indian trust lands and natural and energy resources; supporting social welfare, public safety and justice in tribal communities; and promoting tribal self-determination and self-governance.*

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