Action quadruples tribe’s reservation

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WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Kevin K. Washburn announced today that he has signed a reservation proclamation for approximately 292 acres of trust land located in the city of Payson, Gila County, Ariz., belonging to the Tonto Apache Tribe of Arizona. The parcel will be added to the Tribe’s existing reservation under the authority of the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934 (48 Stat. 984; 25 U.S.C. 467).

“I am pleased to exercise the authority delegated to me by the Secretary of the Interior and to issue this reservation proclamation, which quadruples the size of the Tonto Apache Tribe’s reservation,” Washburn said. “Restoring tribal homelands is one of President Obama’s highest priorities. Consistent with this priority, the Tonto Apache Tribe hopes to develop the new reservation land into homes for tribal members.”

Restoring tribal homelands and furthering tribal sovereignty are among the Obama Administration’s highest priorities for Indian Country. Tribes exercise significant sovereign powers on reservations and have the ability to govern themselves.

As a result of the proclamation, the Tonto Apache Reservation, previously consisting of 85 acres of land, now encompasses more than 375 acres of land.

A proclamation is a formal declaration issued by the Secretary of the Interior, and delegated to the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, proclaiming that certain lands acquired for an Indian tribe are a new reservation or are being added to an existing reservation. The request for a proclamation must originate from the tribe. The parcel was acquired in trust in 2010 under the authority of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.

The land that is the subject of the proclamation is adjacent to the existing reservation land and was acquired through a land exchange with the U.S. Forest Service. In 2011, the Bureau of Indian Affairs sought input from state and local governments about a proposed reservation proclamation and received no objections or concerns.

The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs is responsible for helping the Secretary of the Interior in fulfilling the federal government’s trust responsibilities to tribal and individual trust beneficiaries and for promoting self-determination and self-governance for the Nation’s 566 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes.