Nearly 90,000 acres of land accepted in trust for Pueblo of Isleta in New Mexico advances important self-governance and self-determination priorities

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ISLETA PUEBLO, N.M. – As part of President Obama's goal of placing half a million acres of tribal homelands into trust for the benefit of tribal nations, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today announced that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has placed 89,978 acres of land into trust status for the Pueblo of Isleta. The Administration's single largest trust acquisition to date brings to nearly 400,000 the total acreage placed in trust on behalf of federally recognized tribes since 2009.

Secretary Jewell made the historic announcement at a formal signing ceremony in Isleta, New Mexico, with Isleta Governor E. Paul Torres, acting Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Lawrence S. Roberts and U.S. Senator Tom Udall.

"This land into trust milestone marks the culmination of years of hard work by the Pueblo of Isleta as well as important progress in the Obama Administration's goals of empowering tribes, restoring tribal homelands to support self-determination and self-governance," Secretary Jewell said. "I congratulate Governor Torres and the Pueblo's leadership for their dedication to this priority, ensuring homelands for future generations."

As part of President Obama's pledge to work nation-to-nation with tribal leaders to strengthen their communities and build their economies, this Administration has taken a total of 397,268 acres into trust during the past seven years. That total represents almost 80 percent of the Administration's goal of placing 500,000 acres into trust by the end of the President's term. The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to acquire land in trust for federally-recognized Native American tribes by the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934.

"Previous policies of allotment, assimilation and virtual moratoriums on restoring tribal homelands continue to have profound negative impacts on tribal communities. During this Administration, tribes have demonstrated that the restoration of tribal homelands promotes safe and prosperous communities for current and future generations," said Acting Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Lawrence S. Roberts. "Tribal leaders across Indian Country continue to place a high priority on restoring tribal homelands. We are fully committed to placing half a million acres of land into trust during this Administration as a step in the direction of correcting misguided policies of previous administrations."

The Pueblo of Isleta, a federally recognized tribe located south of Albuquerque, New Mexico, purchased the property known as the Comanche Ranch and asked the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to accept the property in trust. The Ranch, which was used by the U. S. military as a practice bombing range during World War II, consists of 88,000 acres of land. The Pueblo also acquired another parcel, the Corridor

Property, of approximately 1,900 acres adjacent to the Pueblo. The Pueblo plans to continue current use of the properties.

“The Pueblo of Isleta is very thankful to the foresight of tribal leadership who in 1997 made the purchase of land known as the Comanche Ranch,” said Governor E. Paul Torres. “Through the persistence of tribal leadership and the support of the BIA Southern Pueblos Agency, Albuquerque Area Office, and more importantly, the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, the Pueblo of Isleta will celebrate a historic event as this land base is placed into Trust for the Pueblo of Isleta.”

Under federal law, lands held in trust for Native Americans and Alaska Natives cannot be sold or transferred to non-Native Americans and can benefit from federal programs for business development, housing, environmental and cultural protection. Typical uses of trust land include governmental operations, cultural activities, agricultural/forestry activities, housing, economic development, social and community services, health care and educational facilities.